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DUTY AND OTHER IRISH COMEDIES

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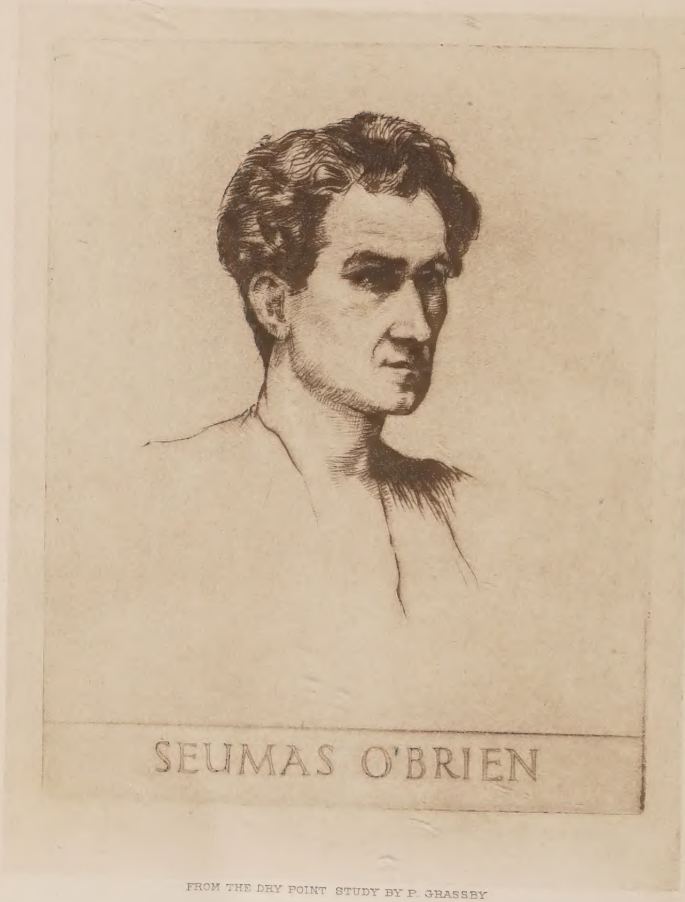

FROM THE DRY POINT STUDY BY P. GRASSBY

DUTY

AND OTHER IRISH COMEDIES

BY

SEUMAS O'BRIEN

WITHDRAWN
From EOU Library

BOSTON
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1916

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DUTY

A Comedy in One Act

CHARACTERS

HEAD CONSTABLE MULLIGAN . . *A Member of the Royal Irish Constabulary*

SERGEANT DOOLEY . . . . . *A Member of the R. I. C.*

CONSTABLE HUGGINS . . . . . *A Member of the R. I. C.*

MICUS GOGGIN

PADNA SWEENEY

MRS. ELLEN COTTER . . . . . *A public-house keeper*

DUTY was produced for the first time at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, December 17, 1913, with the following cast:

Head Constable Mulligan, R.I.C.	ARTHUR SINCLAIR
Sergeant Dooley, R.I.C.	FRED O'DONOVAN
Constable Huggins, R.I.C. . . .	SYDNEY J. MORGAN
Micus Goggin	J. M. KERRIGAN
Padna Sweeney	J. A. O'ROURKE
Mrs. Ellen Cotter	UNA O'CONNOR

DUTY

Back kitchen of a country public house. Micus and Padna seated at a table drinking from pewter pints. Mrs. Cotter enters in response to a call.

PADNA (*pointing to pint measures*)

Fill 'em again, ma'am, please.

MRS. COTTER (*taking pints, and wiping table*)

Fill 'em again, is it? Indeed I won't do any such thing.

MICUS

Indeed you will, Mrs. Cotter.

MRS. COTTER

Don't you know that 'tis Sunday night, an' that the police might call any minute?

MICUS (*disdainfully*)

The police!

PADNA

Bad luck to them!

MICUS

Amen!

MRS. COTTER

This will be the last drink that any one will get in this house to-night.

[*Exit.*

MICUS

'Tis a nice state of affairs to think that dacent men, after a hard week's work, can't have a drink in pace and quietness in the town they were born and reared

in, without bein' scared out o' their senses by the police!

PADNA

'Tis the hell of a thing, entirely! I don't see what's gained be closin' the pubs at all, unless it be to give the police somethin' to do.

MICUS

The overfed and undertaught bla'gards!

PADNA

As far as I can see, there's as much drink sold as if the pubs were never closed.

MICUS

There is, an' more; for if it wasn't forbidden to drink porter, it might be thought as little about as water.

PADNA

I don't believe that, Micus. Did you ever hear of a pint or even a gallon of water makin' any one feel like Napoleon?

[*Mrs. Cotter enters and places drinks on table.*

PADNA (*handing money*)

There ye are, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER (*takes money*)

Hurry now like good boys, for forty shillin's is a lot to pay for a pint o' porter, an' that's what 'twill cost ye if the police comes in an' finds ye here. An' I'll lose me license into the bargain.

[*Exit.*

MICUS

One would think be the way the police are talked about that they had charge of the whole Universe!

PADNA

An' who else has charge of it but themselves an' the magistrates, or justices o' the pace, as they're called?

MICUS

They're worse than the police.

PADNA

They're as bad anyway, an' that's bad enough.

MICUS (*scornfully*)

Justices o' the pace!

PADNA

Micus!

MICUS

What?

PADNA (*thoughtfully*)

There's no justice in the world.

MICUS

Damn the bit! Sure 'tisn't porter we should be drinkin' a cold night like this!

PADNA (*as he sips from pint*)

'Tis well to have it these times.

MICUS

The world is goin' to the dogs, I'm afraid.

PADNA

'Tisn't goin' at all, but gone.

MICUS

An' nobody seems to care.

PADNA

Some pretend they do, like the preachers, but they're paid for it. I do be often wonderin' after readin' the newspapers if God has forgotten about the world altogether.

MICUS

I wouldn't be surprised, for nothin' seems to be right. There's the police, for instance. They can do what they like, an' we must do what we're told, like childer.

PADNA

Isn't the world a star, Micus?

MICUS (*with pint to his mouth*)

Of course it is.

PADNA

Then it must be the way that it got lost among all the other stars one sees on a frosty night.

MICUS

Are there min in the other stars too?

PADNA

So I believe.

MICUS

That's queer.

PADNA

Sure, everythin' is queer.

MICUS

If the min in the other stars are like the peelers, there won't be much room in Hell after the good are taken to Heaven on the last day.

PADNA

The last day! I don't like to think about the last day.

MICUS

Why so?

PADNA

Well, 'tis terrible to think that we might be taken to Heaven, (*pauses*) an' our parents an' childer might be sent (*points towards the floor*) with the Protestants.

MICUS

If the Protestants will be as well treated in the next world as they are in this, I wouldn't mind goin' with 'em meself.

PADNA

I wouldn't like to be a Protestant after I'm dead, Micus.

MICUS (*knocks with his pint on the table and Mrs. Cotter enters; he points to pints*)
The same again, Mrs. Cotter.

MRS. COTTER
Indeed, ye won't get another drop.

MICUS
This will be our last, ma'am. Don't be hard on us. 'Tis only a night of our lives, an' we'll be all dead one day.

MRS. COTTER (*as she leaves the room with measures in hand*)
Ye ought to be ashamed o' yerselves to be seen in a public house a night like this.

MICUS
We're ashamed o' nothin,' ma'am. We're only ourselves an' care for nobody.

MRS. COTTER (*turning round*)
Well, this is the very last drink ye'll get then.
[*Exit.*

PADNA
Women are all alike.

MICUS
They are, God forgive them.

PADNA
They must keep talkin'.

MICUS
An' 'tis only a fool that 'ud try to prevent 'em.

MRS. COTTER (*entering and placing measures on table*)
Hurry up, now, an' don't have me at the next Petty Sessions.
[*Exit.*

MICUS (*after testing drink*)
Nothin' like a good pint o' "Dundon's."

PADNA

'Tis great stuff.

MICUS

May the Lord spare them long, an' they buildin' houses for the poor an' churches for God!

PADNA

An' all out o' the beer money?

MICUS

Of course. What else could ye make money at in a country like this?

PADNA

'Tis a thirsty climate!

MICUS

If all those who made money built houses for the poor an' gave employment, there 'ud soon be no poor at all.

PADNA

You're talkin' what's called socialism now, an' that's too delicate a plant, like Christianity, to thrive in a planet like this. So I heard one o' them preacher chaps sayin' the other evenin'.

MICUS

Well, be all accounts, we're no better off than those who heard St. Peter himself preachin'. The poor still only get the promise of Heaven from the clergy.

PADNA

That's all they'll ever get.

MICUS

The world must surely be lost, Padna.

PADNA

Nothin' surer!

MICUS

If God ever goes rummagin' among the stars an' finds it again, there'll be bad work, I'm thinkin'.

PADNA

I wonder will it be a great fire or another flood?

MICUS

'Tis hard to tell!

[*A loud knocking is heard at the door.*

MRS. COTTER (*from the shop*)

Who's there?

VOICE

Police.

PADNA

May ye freeze there!

MICUS

Or trip over the threshold and break ye'r neck!

MRS. COTTER (*rushing into kitchen*)

Quick! quick! quick! (*Points to a door*) This way, boys!

[*Micus and Padna enter a small room off the kitchen. Mrs. Cotter locks the door and opens the street door for the policeman, the knocking getting louder meanwhile.*

MRS. COTTER

Wait a minit! Wait a minit! I'm comin', I'm comin'.

[*Opens door. Enter Head Constable Mulligan, R. I. C.*

HEAD

You took a long time to open the door, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

I know I did, but it wasn't me fault, Head. I had the house locked up for the night, an' couldn't find where I left the kay.

HEAD

'Tis all right, ma'am. I can lose things meself. (*Looks carefully around*) 'Tis a lonesome thing to see the house so empty.

MRS. COTTER

'Tis Sunday night, Head.

HEAD

Of course, of course! All the same I'd prefer to see it full — of bona-fide travellers, I mean.

MRS. COTTER

Thank ye, Head. How's Mrs. Mulligan an' the childer?

HEAD

Wisha, purty fair. How's the world usin' yourself?

MRS. COTTER

Only for the rheumatics I'd have no cause to grumble.

HEAD

'Tis well to be alive at all these times. An' Ballyferris isn't the best place to keep any one alive in winter time.

MRS. COTTER

Or summer time ayther. Whin the weather is good trade is bad.

HEAD

That's always the way in this world. We're no sooner out o' one trouble before another commences. I always admire the way you bear your troubles, though, Mrs. Cotter.

MRS. COTTER

I does me best, Head.

HEAD

Just like meself! Just like meself! The Government makes laws an' I must see that they're not broken. (*Rubbing his hands together*) 'Tis a cold night, an' no doubt about it.

MRS. COTTER

Bad weather is due to us now.

HEAD

Everythin' bad is due to some of us. Only for that shark of an Inspector 'tis little trouble I'd be givin' a dacent woman like yourself a night like this.

MRS. COTTER

He's very strict, I hear.

HEAD

He's strict, disagreeable, a Protestant, a teetotaler, an' a Cromwellian to boot!

MRS. COTTER

The Lord protect us! 'Tis a wonder you're alive at all!

HEAD

Wisha, I'm only half alive. The cold never agrees with me. (*Looking at fire*) That's not a very dangerous fire, an' I'm as cold as a snowball.

MRS. COTTER (*with her back to the door behind which Padna and Micus are hiding*) There's a fine fire up-stairs in the sittin'-room.

HEAD (*draws a chair and sits down*)

Thank ye, ma'am, but 'tisn't worth me while goin' up-stairs. As I said before, I wouldn't trouble you at all only for the Inspector, an' like Nelson, he expects every one to do their duty.

MRS. COTTER

'Tis a hard world.

HEAD

An' a cold world too. I often feels cold on a summer day.

MRS. COTTER

That's too bad! Is there no cure for it?

HEAD

They say there's a cure for everything.

MRS. COTTER

I wonder if ye took a drop o' "Wise's" ten-year-old! It might help to warm ye, if ye sat be the fire up-stairs.

HEAD (*brightening up*)

Now, 'pon me word, but that's strange! I was just thinkin' o' the same thing meself. That's what's called telepattery or thought transference.

MRS. COTTER

Tella — what, Head?

HEAD (*with confidence*)

Telepattery, ma'am. 'Tis like this: I might be in America —

MRS. COTTER

I wish you were —

HEAD (*with a look of surprise*)

What's that, ma'am?

MRS. COTTER

I wish for your own sake that you were in a country where you would get better paid for your work.

HEAD (*satisfied*)

Thank ye, ma'am. I suppose min like meself must wait till we go to the other world to get our reward.

MRS. COTTER

Very likely!

HEAD

Well, as I was sayin', I might be in America, or New York, Boston, Chicago, or any o' thim foreign places, an' you might be in this very house, or up in your sister's house, or takin' a walk down the town, an' I'd think o' some thought, an' at that very second you'd think o' the same thought, an' nayther of us would know that we were both thinkin' o' the same thing. That's tellepattery, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

'Tis a surprisin' thing, surely! Is it hot or cold you'll have the whiskey, Head?

HEAD

Cold, if ye please.

[*Exit Mrs. Cotter. While she is away, he walks up and down whistling some popular air. Enter Mrs. Cotter.*

MRS. COTTER

Will I bring it up-stairs for you?

HEAD

Indeed, I'm givin' you too much trouble as it is. I'll try an' take it where I am. (*Takes glass and tastes*) That is good stuff.

MRS. COTTER

I'm glad you like it.

HEAD

Who wouldn't like it?

MRS. COTTER

I don't know the taste of it.

HEAD (*as he finishes contents of glass*)

May ye be always so, though there's nothin' like it all the same. (*Handing coin*) I think I'll have a little drop from meself this time.

MRS. COTTER (*as she takes the money*)

Will I bring it up-stairs?

HEAD

Erra, don't bother! I'm beginnin' to feel meself again.

[*Fills his pipe until she returns.*

MRS. COTTER (*entering and handing drink*)

Did you bring your overcoat with you, Head?

HEAD

Why so, ma'am?

MRS. COTTER

Because the cold o' the rain is there. I wouldn't make any delay but go home immediately. You might get a wettin'.

HEAD (*feeling his tunic*)

This wouldn't leave in a drop o' rain in a hundred years, ma'am.

[*Knock at door.*

MRS. COTTER

Who's there?

VOICE

Police!

HEAD

Police, did I hear?

MRS. COTTER

'Tis the Sergeant's voice.

HEAD

Glory to be God! I'm ruined! If he finds the smell o' whiskey from me, he'll tell the Inspector, an' then Head Constable Mulligan is no more!

MRS. COTTER

Is he as bad as that?

HEAD

He has no conscience at all. He's a friend o' the Inspector's. (*Knocking continues at door*) Don't open that door till I tell you — that's if you don't want to find a corpse on the floor.

MRS. COTTER

Sure, I must open the door.

HEAD

Time enough. He's paid for waitin'. Have you such a thing as an onion in the house?

MRS. COTTER

I didn't see an onion for the last three weeks.

HEAD (*scratching his head*)

What the blazes will I do? (*Looking towards coal hole*) Whist! I'm saved. I'll go in here until he's gone. (*Goes in and puts out his head*) You can open now, but get rid of him as soon as you can.

[*Exit Mrs. Cotter. Enter the Sergeant.*

SERGEANT

So you opened at last. Well, better late than never!

MRS. COTTER

I'm sorry for keepin' you waitin', Sergeant. I don't open the door for any one on Sunday nights, an' whin you said "Police," I thought it was one o' the boys tryin' to desaive me.

SERGEANT

I see! I see! There's a lot o' desaitful people in the town, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

There are, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

There are indeed. (*Coughs*) I'm sick an' tired o' the place altogether.

MRS. COTTER

I thought it agreed with you. You're lookin' very well, anyway.

SERGEANT

I'm not feelin' well at all thin. (*Coughs*) There's nothin' more deceptive than looks at times. (*Coughs*)

MRS. COTTER

True.

SERGEANT

'Tis in me bed I should be instead of troublin' dacent

people like yourself a night like this. (*Coughs*) But duty is duty, an' it must be done. If I didn't do what I'm told, that bla'gard of a Head Constable would soon have another an' maybe a worse man in my place.

MRS. COTTER

The Lord save us!

SERGEANT

But as herself says: There's no use in the Government makin' laws if the people don't keep them.

MRS. COTTER

That's so.

SERGEANT

Keepin' the world in order is no aisy business, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

'Tis a great responsibility.

SERGEANT (*drawing a chair to the fire and sitting down*)

'Pon me word I'm tired an' cold too.

MRS. COTTER

Wouldn't ye go home and go to bed, Sergeant?

SERGEANT

If I went to bed at this hour, the Head would send a report to his chum the Inspector, statin' that I was drunk. (*Coughs*)

MRS. COTTER

That's a bad cough. How long is it troublin' ye?

SERGEANT

Only since supper time. I was eatin' a bit o' cold meat, an' a bone or somethin' stuck there. (*Points at his throat*)

MRS. COTTER

An' what did ye do for it?

SERGEANT

What could I do for it?

MRS. COTTER

Ye could take a drink o' somethin' an' wash it down.

SERGEANT

I tried some cold tea. (*Coughs*)

MRS. COTTER

I wonder would a bottle of stout do any good.

SERGEANT

'Twould be no harm to try.

MRS. COTTER

Will ye have a bottle?

SERGEANT

To tell ye the truth, I don't like bein' disobligin', ma'am. (*Coughs*)

[*Exit Mrs. Cotter. While she is away, he walks up and down, whistling the while.*

MRS. COTTER (*at door*)

Ye might as well come up-stairs, Sergeant. There's a fine fire in the sitting-room.

SERGEANT

I'm first rate where I am. Thank you all the same.

[*Takes stout and finishes it without withdrawing it from his mouth. Coughs.*

MRS. COTTER

How do you feel now?

SERGEANT (*wiping his mouth with a large old handkerchief*) 'Tis gone! I mean the bone. I feel meself again.

MRS. COTTER

I'm glad of that. (*Looking at clock*) 'Tis gone half-past ten, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

Plenty o' time. We'll be a long time dead, an' happy I hope.

MRS. COTTER

Amen!

SERGEANT

'Tis my belief that we should all try to do good while we're alive.

MRS. COTTER

There's a lot o' good people in the world, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

There is, ma'am, but nearly every one o' them thinks that they're better than what they are. That's what annoys me.

MRS. COTTER

Sure 'tis imagination that keeps the world movin'.

SERGEANT

Yes, an' ambition. All the same, 'tis a good job that people can't see themselves as they really are.

MRS. COTTER

They wouldn't believe that they were themselves if they could.

SERGEANT

I suppose not.

MRS. COTTER

Won't ye come up to the fire in the sittin'-room?

SERGEANT

Don't be worryin' about me. I'm all right. That was good stout.

MRS. COTTER

The best!

SERGEANT

'Tis a cure for nearly everythin'. Only for takin' a

little now an' again, I'd never be able to stand all the hardships o' me profession.

MRS. COTTER

Hard work isn't easy.

SERGEANT

True! But a good drop o' stout, or better still "spirits" makes many things easy. 'Tis the seed o' pluck, so to speak. I'm feelin' just a little queer about the nerves. I think I'll have a drop o' "Wise's."

[*Exit Mrs. Cotter. While she is away he fills his pipe.*

MRS. COTTER (*entering with drink*)

That's like the noise of a row down the road.

SERGEANT

Erra, let 'em row away! The Head is prowlin' about. Let him separate 'em. 'Tis about time he did somethin' for his livin'. 'Tis a damn shame to have the poor rate payers supportin' the likes of him.

MRS. COTTER

I wouldn't be talkin' like that, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

Why wouldn't I talk? There's as many Head Constables as clergy in the country, an' only for the sergeants an' an odd constable 'tis unknown what 'ud happen!

MRS. COTTER

The Head is a dacent gentleman.

SERGEANT

You don't know anythin' about him. Grumblin' about havin' to shave himself he does be now, an' only for havin' a bald patch on one side of his face, he'd let his whiskers grow altogether.

[*The Head sneezes in the coal hole.*

Eastern [illegible] University
14[illegible]ue
La G[illegible]7850

SERGEANT

What noise is that?

MRS. COTTER (*startled*)

That's only the cat in the coal hole.

SERGEANT (*leaving his chair and moves toward it*)

He must be suffocatin'. I'll open the door an' let him out. Under the grate he should be a cold night like this. (*Opens the door and sees the Head*) Heavens be praised! 'Tis the Head himself!

[*The Head comes out, arranges his cap, and is not aware that he has a black spot on his nose.*

HEAD

'Tis the Head an' every inch an' ounce of him too that stands before ye.

SERGEANT

I thought 'twas y'er ghost I saw.

HEAD (*angrily*)

What the blazes would me ghost be doin' in a coal hole?

SERGEANT

What I'd like to know is what y'erself have been doin' there.

HEAD

That won't take me long to tell. Waitin' and watchin' to catch the likes o' you is what took me there.

SERGEANT

Now, Head, with all due respects, I'd try an' tell the truth if I were you.

HEAD

Sergeant Dooley, sir, anythin' you'll say or be likely to say 'll be used in evidence against you.

SERGEANT

An' anythin' that you say or don't say may be used in evidence against you.

HEAD (*enraged*)
Sergeant Dooley!

SERGEANT (*coolly*)
Yes, Head.

HEAD
Do you know that y'er addressin' y'er superior officer?

SERGEANT
The less said about superiority the better.

HEAD
You can't deny that I found you drinkin' on these licensed premises while on duty.

SERGEANT
I might as well tell you candidly that you have no more chance o' frightenin' me or desaivin' me than you have of catchin' whales in Casey's duck-pond.

HEAD (*passionately*)
I'll — I'll — I —

SERGEANT
You'll have a drink from me, an' we'll say no more about the matter. I wouldn't blame any man for takin' a drop a cold night like this. I suppose 'twill be "Wise's" the same as the last? That's if me sense o' smell isn't out of order.

HEAD (*crestfallen, blows his breath on the palm of his hand and looks at the Sergeant*) Is it as bad as that?

SERGEANT
I smelt it the instant I came in, an' wondered where 'twas comin' from.

HEAD
I only took it to avoid catchin' cold.

SERGEANT
Just like meself. We must avoid catchin' cold at any

cost. (*To Mrs. Cotter*) Two glasses o' "Wise's," ma'am.

[*Exit Mrs. Cotter.*

SERGEANT (*to Head*)

Wait, an' I'll wipe that black spot off ye'r nose.

[*He does so. Enter Mrs. Cotter.*

MRS. COTTER (*handing drinks*)

The fire up-stairs is blazing away, an' there's no one sittin' by it.

HEAD

We're all right. (*Holding glass*) Here's long life to us!

SERGEANT

Health an' prosperity!

HEAD (*after finishing drink*)

We must have another, for I'm not feelin' too well, an' 'tis better be on the safe side. 'Twas through neglect that some o' the best min died.

SERGEANT

We must not forget that!

HEAD (*to Mrs. Cotter*)

The same again, Mrs. Cotter.

[*Exit Mrs. Cotter with glasses.*

HEAD

I saw be the papers last night that the Royal Irish Constabulary are the finest in the world.

SERGEANT

Sure every one knows that!

HEAD

I wonder what kind are all the others?

SERGEANT

That's what I'd like to know.

MRS. COTTER (*at door*)

Will I bring them up to the sittin'-room, gentlemen?

HEAD

We're first class as we are, ma'am.

[*Mrs. Cotter hands the glasses and a loud knock is heard at the door.*

MRS. COTTER

Who's there?

VOICE

Police!

HEAD

'Tis the constable!

SERGEANT

The bla'gard surely!

HEAD

What'll we do?

SERGEANT

Take the drinks first, an' consider after.

[*They finish drinks and hand back the glasses to Mrs. Cotter.*

HEAD

I suppose we had better hide in the coal hole. He has a better nose than yourself, an' one word from him to the Inspector would soon deprive us o' both stripes an' pensions.

SERGEANT

I suppose the coal hole is the best place, though it does offend me dignity to go there.

HEAD

Wisha, bad luck to you an' ye'r dignity. Come on here!

[*The Head enters, and the Sergeant follows. Mrs. Cotter opens the street door and the Constable enters.*

CONSTABLE (*sarcastically*)

Thanks very much for openin' the door, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

I'm sorry for keepin' you waitin', Constable. I was sayin' me prayers up-stairs before goin' to bed.

CONSTABLE

If I had known that, I wouldn't have disturbed you. I hope you said one for me.

MRS. COTTER

Of course I did. I always ses a prayer for the police.

CONSTABLE

An' right too, ma'am, for 'tis little time we have for prayin'. There's no rest for a man once he joins the Force. Whin y're not kept busy thinkin' o' one thing, y're kept busy thinkin' o' somethin' else.

MRS. COTTER

Thinkin' is worse than workin'.

CONSTABLE

A hundred times. (*Looking at his watch*) 'Tis a long time since first Mass this mornin'. Saturday! Sunday! Monday! 'Tis all the same whin y're in the Force. On y'er feet all day, an' kep' awake be the childer all night. An' whin pay day comes, all y'er hard earnin's goes to keep the wolf from the door.

MRS. COTTER

God help us!

CONSTABLE

Say what ye will, but life is an awful bother.

MRS. COTTER

We must go through it.

CONSTABLE

Well, 'tis a good job we don't live as long as the alligators. We might have to support our grandchilder if we did, an' I may tell you it gives me enough to do to support me own.

MRS. COTTER

How many have you now, Constable?

CONSTABLE

Seven, an' the wife's mother.

MRS. COTTER

I thought she was dead.

CONSTABLE (*disgusted*)

Dead! There's five years more in her!

MRS. COTTER

You seem to be in a very bad humor to-night.

CONSTABLE

An' why not? When I have to put up with that bla'gard of a Sergeant — not to mention the Head-constable!

MRS. COTTER

We all have our troubles.

CONSTABLE

Some of us get more than our share. An' 'tis far from troublin' a dacent woman like you I'd be, only for the Sergeant, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

Excuse me, Constable. I can't keep me eyes open with the sleep.

CONSTABLE

I'm sorry for troublin' you. But duty is duty, an' it must be done whether we give offence to our best friends or not. Sure, 'tis well I know that you have no one on the premises.

MRS. COTTER

We can't please everybody.

CONSTABLE (*as he draws a chair to the fire and sits down*)

Who would try? I wonder is it snow we're goin' to have?

MRS. COTTER

If you're cold, come up to the fire in the sittin'-room. Or if I were you, I'd take a good walk.

CONSTABLE

I'm tired o' walkin', an' the cold gives me no trouble. 'Tis the pains I have here (*placing his hand on his heart*) that affects me.

MRS. COTTER

What sort are they?

CONSTABLE

Cramps — of the worst kind.

MRS. COTTER

Gracious me! Have you taken anythin' for them?

CONSTABLE

What would be good for 'em?

MRS. COTTER

Hot milk an' pepper.

CONSTABLE

I tried that.

MRS. COTTER

Anythin' else?

CONSTABLE

Nothin' except a smoke.

MRS. COTTER

Maybe a little drop o' "Wise's" would do some good?

CONSTABLE

I'd try anythin' that 'ud lessen the pain, though I'd rather not be troublin' ye.

MRS. COTTER

'Tis no trouble at all.

[*Exit. While she is away, something falls in the room where Micus and Padna are. The Constable fails to*

open the door, and returns to his chair before Mrs. Cotter comes back with the drink.

MRS. COTTER (*handing glass*)

Drink that up, go straight home, bathe ye'r feet in mustard an' water, an' ye'll be as strong as a Protestant in the mornin'!

CONSTABLE (*taking glass*)

Thank ye, ma'am.

[*Drinks it off. The Head in the coal hole sneezes, and the Sergeant shouts* "God bless us!"

CONSTABLE

What's that?

MRS. COTTER

Oh, that's nothin'.

[*Another sneeze and* "God bless us!"

CONSTABLE

Well, if that nothin' isn't somethin', I'm dotin'.

[*Opens door and Head and Sergeant fall out on the floor.*

SERGEANT

'Tis all your fault with your blasted sneezin'.

HEAD

Now, maybe you'll believe that I've a cold.

SERGEANT

Don't be botherin' me. I can't believe meself not to mind a liar like you.

HEAD (*to the Constable, after he has got on his feet*)

Now, sir, what have you got to say for yourself? 'Twill be useless for you to deny that meself an' the Sergeant here (*points to the Sergeant who is still on the floor*) have caught you drinkin' on these licensed premises durin' your hours o' duty.

CONSTABLE

An' what about me catchin' the pair o' ye hidin' in the coal hole o' the same licensed premises, an' a strong smell o' whiskey from ye?

HEAD

'Tis from yourself that you smells the whiskey.

CONSTABLE (*takes an onion from his pocket, peels it, and eats it slowly*)

I defy you or any one else to find the smell o' whiskey from me.

HEAD (*to the Sergeant*)

Well, don't that beat Banagher?

SERGEANT

The Devil himself couldn't do better.

CONSTABLE

Well, gentlemen, I'm sorry for troublin' ye, but duty is duty. I'll now place ye under arrest an' send for the Inspector.

HEAD (*in a rage*)

No more o' this nonsense! You'll pay for this night's work, believe me.

CONSTABLE (*smiling*)

I'll pay for a drink for both o' ye for the sake of old times, an' the less said about this night's work the better. (*All remain silent for a short time*) Well, are ye goin' to have the drink?

SERGEANT (*to Head*)

We might as well take it, for 'tis the first time he ever offered to stand, an' it may be the last.

HEAD (*after much consideration*)

Very well, then, I'll have a drop o' the best.

SERGEANT

An' I'll have the same.

CONSTABLE

Three glasses o' "Wise's," Mrs. Cotter.

MRS. COTTER (*from the bar*)

Certainly, Constable.

[*The Head and Sergeant remain silent, and the Constable paces up and down with his hands in his pockets, whistling some popular tune, until Mrs. Cotter brings in the drinks.*

MRS. COTTER (*as she places the drinks on the table*)

I don't like to see ye in this cold kitchen, gentlemen. Can't ye come up-stairs to the sitting-room?

CONSTABLE

'Tisn't worth our while, ma'am. We have our work to do. (*Taking glass in hand*) Slainthe!

[*Drinks half the quantity of whiskey. The Head and Sergeant do likewise. A noise like the falling of furniture is heard from the room where Padna and Micus are.*

HEAD (*startled*)

What's that?

[*There is silence for a while, then Micus is heard singing.*

MICUS

"We are the boys of Wexford
Who fought with heart an' hand
To burst in twain the galling chain,
An' free our native land."

HEAD (*to Mrs. Cotter who has come from the bar*)

I'll have the kay of that door, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

What kay, Head?

HEAD

The kay o' that door, ma'am.

[*Strikes door with his fist.*

MRS. COTTER

Erra, Head, what's the matter with ye? That door is nailed up this seven years. That singin' comes from the next house.

HEAD

Glory be to God! Do any one alive tell the truth? (*Catches hold of chair by the back*) If you don't give me the kay, I'll burst open the door.

MRS. COTTER

I have no kay, Head.

HEAD (*holding chair over his head*)

Once more I demand the kay in the name of His Majesty the King, before I puts the legs o' the chair flyin' through the ledges.

MRS. COTTER (*crying, hands key*)

Oh, wisha, what'll I do at all?

HEAD (*taking key*)

You'll be told that later on, ma'am.

MRS. COTTER

They are only two neighbors like y'erselves. Can't ye go away an' lave 'em alone?

HEAD (*placing key*)

Not a word now, ma'am, for anythin' that you will say or won't say must be used in evidence ag'inst ye.

PADNA (*singing*)

"Who fears to speak of Ninety-eight?
Who blushes at the name?
When cowards mock the patriots' fate,
Who hangs his head for shame?
He's all a knave or half a slave,
Who slights his country thus:
But true men, like you, men,
Will drink your glass with us."

HEAD (*to Mrs. Cotter*)

That's a nice song to be singin' on a licensed premises, ma'am. 'Twould cause a riot if there was enough o' people about. No less than raidin' the police barracks would satisfy the likes o' that songster if he was left at large. (*Opens door. Padna and Micus stagger on to the floor. They fall but get on their feet again*) What are ye doin' here?

PADNA

What the devil is that to you?

MICUS

Or to any one else either?

HEAD

Do ye know that this is a licensed premises?

PADNA (*looking at Micus*)

Of course we do.

HEAD

An' do ye know that this is Sunday night an' that I'm the Head Constable, an' that one o' these min here is the Sergeant an' the other is the Constable?

PADNA (*buttons his coat and looks defiantly at them*)

An' do ye know that I'm Padna Sweeney from Clashbeg?

MICUS (*also buttons his coat and looks aggressively at Head*)

An' that I'm his old pal Micus Goggin from Castleclover?

PADNA (*as he staggers*)

Don't mind him, Micus. He's drunk.

HEAD

What's that you're sayin'? Who's drunk?

PADNA

Be jaikus, ye're all drunk.

MICUS

Come on away home, Padna, an' don't mind *them.* They're a bad lot.

PADNA

The smell o' drink from 'em is awful.

MICUS

'Tis disgustin'. I wouldn't be seen in their company. Padna. Come on away.

HEAD (*to Sergeant and Constable*)

Arrest these min!

PADNA

Do ye hear that, Micus?

MICUS (*opening his coat*)

I do, but I won't be insulted be the likes o' them.

PADNA (*opening his coat also*)

Nayther will I!

HEAD (*indignantly*)

Why don't ye arrest these min, I say?

PADNA and MICUS (*together*)

Arrest us, is it? (*They take off their coats, throw them on the ground, and take their stand like pugilists*) Come on, now, and arrest us!

PADNA

I'll take the best man.

MICUS

An' I'll take the lot.

[*The police try to arrest them, and a desperate struggle ensues. The police lose their caps and belts, but eventually succeed in overpowering them.*

MRS. COTTER (*rushes to the rescue*)

O boys, for my sake, an' for the sake o' ye'r wives an' families, have no crossness but lave the house quietly.

PADNA (*as he struggles with the Sergeant*)

Don't fret, ma'am. We'll have no crossness. All we want is to wipe the police from the face o' the earth altogether.

MICUS

That's all. We'll have no crossness.

[*Handcuffs are placed on Micus and Padna.*

HEAD (*shouts*)

Take these min to the Barrack.

[*They struggle violently, and sing as they leave the house.*

PADNA and MICUS (*together*)

"When boyhood's fire was in my blood,
I read of ancient freemen
For Grace and Rome who bravely stood,
Three hundred men and three men.
And then I prayed I yet might see
Our fetters rent in twain,
And Ireland, long a province, be
A Nation once again."

[*Mrs. Cotter follows them to the door, and while the Head is alone, he writes in his notebook, talking aloud as he does so.*

HEAD

"Found drunk an' disorderly on the licensed premises o' Mrs. Cotter, Ballyferris, during prohibited hours. Using bad an' offensive language. Resistin' arrest, assaultin' the police, an' doin' sayrious damage to their garments. Singin' songs of a nature likely to cause rebellion an' threatenin' to exterminate the whole Royal Irish Constabulary." (*Places book back in pocket*)

[*There is a little whiskey in each of the three glasses that were placed on the mantleshelf. The Head pours*

the contents of each into one and drinks it before Mrs. Cotter returns. Enter Mrs. Cotter.

MRS. COTTER

Oh, Head, you won't be hard on a lone widow, will ye? Don't prosecute thim poor min. Sure, they have done no more harm than y'erselves.

HEAD (*as he stands at door*)

Mrs. Cotter, ma'am! I'm surprised at you.

MRS. COTTER

For what, Head?

HEAD

To think that you'd dare attempt to interfere with me in the discharge o' me duty!

MRS. COTTER

DUTY!

CURTAIN

JURISPRUDENCE

A Comedy in One Act

CHARACTERS

MARTIN O'FLYNN . . . . . *A Resident Magistrate*
CORNELIUS JOHN MICHAEL O'CROWLEY . . . . . *A New Justice of the Peace*
PHELAN DUFFY . . . . . *A Barrister-at-Law*
BRENNAN CASSIDY . . . . . *A Solicitor*
PETER DWYER . . . . . *Clerk of the Petty Sessions Court*
RICHARD FENNELL
MARGARET FENNELL . . . . . *Wife of Richard Fennell*
SERGEANT HEALY . . . . . *A Member of the Royal Irish Constabulary*
CONSTABLE O'RYAN . . . . . *A Member of the R. I. C.*
CONSTABLE MCCARTHY . . . . . *A Member of the R. I. C.*

JURISPRUDENCE

A Comedy in One Act

Scene: Room in courthouse at Ballybraggan. Magistrates and clerk of court seated on the Bench. Barristers, townspeople, and police in body of the court.

MARTIN O'FLYNN (*rises and wipes his brow with a red handkerchief*) Members of the Munster Bar, Members of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and — gentlemen (*pauses*), and ladies also, before the Court opens for the dispensation of justice, I would like to say a few short words about a matter that concerns not only ourselves here present, and the town of Ballybraggan in particular, but everybody alive to their own interests and the whole world in general. We have with us to-day one who is no stranger to the people of this historic town, and it is with feelings of the highest regard that I stand before you in my privileged capacity as resident magistrate to perform what seems to me to be the most pleasing and likewise the most joyous of duties that could fall to the lot of any man, whether he might come from where the waves of the tumultuous Pacific wash the shores of the great Western world or from the town of Mallow itself. And that is to have the honor and glorification of introducing to you our new and worthy magistrate, Mr. Cornelius John Michael O'Crowley. (*Applause*) Far be it from me indeed to flatter any man, but there are times when we must tell the truth. (*Applause*) And

when I say that there is no one more humble for a man of his achievements from here to Honolulu than Mr. O'Crowley himself, I am only telling the truth in a plain and unadorned form. Every effort put forth by Mr. O'Crowley for the welfare of mankind has been characterised by success, and what greater proof of his ability could we have than the fact that he is one of the largest wine merchants and hotel proprietors in the length and breadth of Munster? Indeed, if Mr. O'Crowley wasn't fully qualified for upholding and sustaining the dignity of the coveted title, Justice of the Peace, His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, who is both a scholar, a gentleman, and a Scotchman to boot, would not be so pleased and delighted to confer on him an honor only worthy of a man of his attainments, sentiments, and quality of character. (*Applause*)

PHELAN DUFFY

On behalf of the legal profession of which I have the honor of being the oldest member, I am not only desirous but extremely overjoyed to have the golden opportunity of congratulating our worthy townsman Mr. Cornelius John Michael O'Crowley on the great distinction that has befallen him. We all have heard of that Englishman who said one time, with all the cleverness of an Irishman and a native of Ballybraggan at that: "Some are born great, others acquire greatness, and more have greatness thrust upon them." Now to say that Mr. O'Crowley had greatness thrust upon him would not be a fact, and whether or not he was born great we don't know, but one thing is certain, and that is, he has acquired greatness. And when I say so, I wish it to be distinctly

understood that I am not talking idly or glibly, but with all the sincerity of my heart. With the same sincerity that has characterised all my actions since I was first called to the Bar, and made of me what I am to-day. With the same sincerity that characterises every successful member of the legal profession, be he Irish, Scotch, or American. Let critics say what they will, but the fact remains that success is the best answer to adverse criticism. A man's true worth may not always be appreciated in a cold and heartless world like ours, but there will ever be found a few who can always sympathise with us in our sorrows and rejoice with us in our triumphs. And Mr. O'Crowley has the rare gift which enables him to do both. (*Applause*) He is a man of large and noble ideals, of sterling qualities and knows human nature in all its many phases. He knows the wants of the people and what's more, he knows how to satisfy them. He would not allow any man's light to be hidden under a bushel, so to speak, and why should we allow the bushel to hide his? (*Applause*) Let credit be given where credit is due, was ever his motto. And only one month has elapsed since he said to me, after defending his own brother on a breach of the Sunday Closing Act in this very courthouse, "My heartiest thanks and warmest congratulations for your splendid victory. There isn't another man in the whole country, not even Tim Healy himself, who could win that case."

SERGEANT HEALY

On behalf of the Royal Irish Constabulary, I wish to be associated with the hearty and unanimous welcome extended to Mr. O'Crowley, whom I have known since the first night I came to the town. And my

only regret is that I did not know him before, because men with his rare traits of character are not to be met with every day. His genial and kindly disposition has endeared him to us all. His doors are never closed on either Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Day, or any other day. Friend or foe, stranger or native of Ballybraggan, are all the same to Mr. O'Crowley. Each and every one is received with the same hearty welcome. He is a man whom we think of in our hours of suffering, whether it be on the scorching heat of a summer's day or the blighting cold of a winter's night. It is my earnest wish, and I am sure that I am only expressing the sentiments of the whole of Munster, that the success which has attended Mr. O'Crowley in all the ventures of his useful life will be doubled in his capacity as Justice of the Peace. (*Applause*)

PETER DWYER

In all the long years that I have acted as clerk of this court, I never felt more pleased at the coming of a new magistrate than when I heard of the discretion of His Excellency in selecting Mr. O'Crowley for this most exalted position. All that I might say in my congratulations and welcome has already been said, and I can only concur in the good wishes that have been offered, and though a lot more might have been said of one so praiseworthy, I know that Mr. O'Crowley will understand, it is not that we like him less but that we respect him more. Mr. O'Crowley is a man who is above pride and does not want the walls of Rome or the stones of the Munster roads to know what he does for mankind. So I will now conclude by wishing him all the success that he deserves, in the future and hereafter.

MR. C. J. M. O'CROWLEY

Brother magistrates, members of the Bar, members of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and gentlemen: From the bottom of my heart I thank you for all the high compliments you have paid me this day, and I only hope that I will be long spared to be a source of comfort and consolation to the men and women of Ballybraggan. I know, of course, that I am not a pararagom of perfection, but I have the wonderful satisfaction of knowing that I have been appreciated in my own time, and that's more than some of the world's best poets, philosophers, and other servants of mankind could have said. The superdalliance of some and the pomposity and congential insufficiency of others have always been a warning to me, and when opportunity sallied forth from her hiding place I never failed to recognise her queenly presence and extend a *cead-mile-failte*, and make of her my own, so to speak. Such was the way of Wellington and his contemporary Hannibal, and such must be the way of every man who must serve his country and himself. And believe me, much as the people of Ballybraggan think about me, I think every bit as much about them. It is hardly necessary for me to say that we only get what we deserve in this world, and sometimes a little more or a little less as the case may be. The desirable propensities of the people of the town have endeared me to them with a spirit as strong as that which makes the ivy cling to the oak, and as we see the ivy fondly clinging to that monarch of trees, whether it sprouts its green leaves in the glorious sunshine or falls to the ground with decay, so will I cling to the people of Ballybraggan. Once again, I thank you,

but in conclusion I must say that I will do all in my power to prove worthy of the reliance and confidence placed in me. (*Applause*)

PETER DWYER

The court is now open for the dispensation of justice. The only case before us to-day is one of house-breaking, drunkenness from excessive use of poteen, which is an illegal drink, and resisting arrest by the police. The charge is laid against one Richard Fennell, and cross-summonses have been issued to Mr. and Mrs. Fennell.

PHELAN DUFFY

On behalf of my client, Mrs. Fennell, I wish to impress upon the Bench the gravity of the offence with which the accused Richard Fennell is charged, namely, drunkenness from excessive use of an illegal intoxicant known as poteen, house-breaking, terrorizing and almost paralyzing with fear his highly strung and sensitive wife, and adding insult to injury in resisting arrest by his Majesty's guardian of law and order, Sergeant Healy. These are grave charges indeed, and who will gainsay that a man gifted with the spirit of destruction like Mr. Fennell is a menace to the peace-abiding town of Ballybraggan? Not since the heartless barbarians made their ruthless descent upon the Roman Empire was there such havoc wrought in any one house, or did any individual member of society suffer so much from nervous prostration as Mrs. Fennell.

MR. FENNELL (*interrupting*)

Can't a man dust his own furniture and chastise his own wife if he feels like doing so?

MR. O'CROWLEY

Order! order! There must be no interruptions in this court of justice.

PHELAN DUFFY (*continuing*)

You can well imagine how poor Mrs. Fennell thought that the end of the world was coming when she saw every bit of ware on the kitchen dresser smashed in pieces no larger than threepenny bits on the floor. And the alarm clock that woke Mr. Fennell every morning and reminded him that it was time to get up and make his wife's breakfast, which she always got in bed, struck dumb for ever with its works battered beyond recognition. Think of this poor woman's feelings at such an awful moment.

MR. FENNELL (*interrupting*)

Feelings! She has no more feelings than a tombstone.

PHELAN DUFFY (*continuing*)

Think of this decent, self-respecting, loving wife and mother, who has had no less than three husbands.

MRS. FENNELL (*interrupting*)

An' I'll have another too, please God!

PHELAN DUFFY

Think, I say, of three husbands, and ten children. Six resting in the little churchyard at Ennisbeg, and four resting in the Royal Irish Constabulary. That Mr. Fennell was what we would call a model husband, before he touched this poteen goes without saying. Everything that his wife told him to do was done, and done to her satisfaction, and done whether he liked the doing of it or no.

MRS. FENNELL (*interrupting*)

I always made my husbands do what they were told.

PHELAN DUFFY

Mr. Fennell is no doubt guilty of a serious offence, but whoever sold him the base liquor is far more guilty in the eyes of the law, as well as the public. Needless to state, this fact does not in any way lessen the gravity of Mr. Fennell's offence, and I would ask the Bench not to allow any feelings of sentiment to interfere with the discharge of their duty. I would ask that the severest penalty allowed be inflicted on the accused for his unwarranted, unmanly, and blackguardly conduct.

MRS. FENNELL (*to Phelan Duffy*)

Wisha, bad luck to your impudence to call my husband a bla'gard. A dacent man that never went to the likes of you or any one else for anything.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Order, order.

MRS. FENNELL

'Tis only the likes of lawyers that have the insolence to insult dacent people. Sure when they aren't ignorant they're consated, and their wives and daughters are no better than themselves.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Order, order. Unless you behave yourself, you must be placed under arrest.

MRS. FENNELL

Sure, you don't think I can stand here with a tongue in me head and listen to me husband being insulted, do you?

PETER DWYER

Order, order, Mrs. Fennell, please.

[*She attempts to speak again, and the sergeant places his hand over her mouth. She resents this action, and*

in a struggle which ensues the sergeant falls to the floor. He is helped to his feet by Mrs. Fennell, and both look at each other in a scornful way.

SERGEANT HEALY (*to Mrs. Fennell*)

'Tis a good job for you that you're not Mrs. Healy.

MRS. FENNELL

And 'tis a blessing for you that you're not Mr. Fennell.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Order, order. This conduct is scandalous, Mrs. Fennell, and you must keep quiet.

MR. FENNELL

You might as well be asking a whale to whistle "The Last Rose of Summer" or asking the Kaiser to become a Trappist monk.

PETER DWYER

Order, order. Now please, Mrs. Fennell, come forward and give your evidence.

MRS. FENNELL

All I have to say is that my husband got the delirium tramens from drinking poteen and broke every bit of furniture in the house, an' he might have killed myself.

MR. FENNELL (*very disgusted*)

I wish I knew how.

MRS. FENNELL (*continuing*)

Only for having the good sense of rushing to the front door and shouting for the police. I'm an orphan, your Worship, and that's why I'm here to seek protection from the court. All the same, I haven't a word to say to my husband, the cowardly ruffian, only for his love of poteen, bad temper, and contrary ways.

MR. O'CROWLEY

That will do, Mrs. Fennell.

MRS. FENNELL

Thanks, your Worship.

SERGEANT HEALY (*takes out his notebook. A clay pipe, box of snuff, and handkerchief fall to the floor. The snuff falls on the handkerchief. He replaces the snuff box and the pipe in his pocket, and wipes his face with the snuffy handkerchief. He then opens his notebook for reference and begins*)

On the night of December third (*sneezes and says:* God bless us!) I was on me rounds doin' beat duty in Market Square in the town of Ballybraggan (*Sneezes*) — God bless us! — and all of a sudden without a moment's notice, I was disturbed from me reverie of pious thought, be a great disturbance like the falling of porter barrels from the top floor of a brewery, and without saying as much as the Lord protect me, I swung to me left from whence the noise came and beheld Mrs. Fennell (*Sneeze*) — God bless us! — rushing out of her own house the way you'd see a wild Injun rushing in the moving pictures and shouting like a circus lion before his breakfast: "Police! police! police!" An' as though it was the will of Providence, I was in the very place where me presence was required.

MRS. FENNELL

Accidents will happen, Sergeant.

SERGEANT

They will, and disasters too, if you don't hold your tongue.

PETER DWYER

Order, order.

SERGEANT HEALY (*continuing*)

Well, in with me to the house without a moment's delay, and what did I see but Richard Fennell sitting in an easy chair and smoking a cigar and looking as happy an' contented as a Protestant after a meal of corn beef and cabbage on a Friday. An' the house, the Lord save us! — one would think that 'twas struck be a cyclone. The only thing that remained whole was the chair that he sat in and the decanter that fed the broken glass from which he drank the poteen. "What brings you here?" ses he, to me. An' only I had the presence of mind of clapping the handcuffs on him before I had time to answer such an impertinent question, there might be one more above in the old churchyard and one less in this court of justice. (*Sneezes*) God bless us! The story is nearly ended. (*Sneezes*) God bless us! I — (*Sneezes*) God bless us! I — (*Waits for an expected sneeze and when disappointed he says* "Thank God!") I brought the prisoner to the barrack and have here the poteen that changed him from a law-abiding townsman into a fiend incarnate. (*The sergeant then places the bottle of poteen on the counter, looks very hard at it, pretends to faint from sudden weakness, and asks for a drink of water*) Can I have a little water, if you please?

[*Several rush to assist him. There is no water in the court, and the clerk gets the kind of inspiration that the sergeant desires and fetches the poteen. He pours some out in a glass and gives it to the sergeant.*

PETER DWYER (*to the sergeant*)

Try a little drop of the spirits, Sergeant, as there isn't a drop of water to be had. The plumbers are working at the pipes.

SERGEANT (*softly*)

Bad luck to them for plumbers. They are always a nuisance. (*Before putting glass to his lips*) I suppose I must take it, because I am dry as a bona-fide traveller. (*He finishes it all in one drink*) It doesn't taste too bad after all, and water at its best isn't much good for one who must do a lot of talking. I'll have a little more, if you please.

MR. O'CROWLEY

You can't have any more, Sergeant. That would be abusing your privilege.

SERGEANT HEALY (*softly*)

Alright, your Worship. When a man's as full of the law as meself, 'tis hard to remember when he's privileged.

[*The sergeant recovers and the case proceeds.*

BRENNAN CASSIDY (*for Mr. Fennell*)

On behalf of my client, Mr. Fennell, I wish to point out the absurdity of the charges brought against him. For no reason whatever and without a moment's warning, the sergeant rushed into his house without an invitation or observing the laws of common propriety by ringing the bell, and ruthlessly placed handcuffs on Mr. Fennell and marched him off to prison like a common felon. And not a shadow of evidence as to misbehavior against him except the statements of his wife about the breaking of some furniture. Now, let us suppose that Mr. Fennell did break the furniture. Was not that his own affair? The furniture was his property, and he could do with it as he pleased. Perhaps he did not like the manner in which it was designed, and Mr. Fennell, mistaking his aversion for things not in keeping with his artistic ideals,

came to the conclusion that he was only on a voyage of destruction when he merely was proving how little of the philistine there was in his nature by removing from his home such articles as did not harmonize with his conception of the beautiful. The fact that the whole affair happened so hastily only goes to prove that Mr. Fennell has the artistic temperament.

MRS. FENNELL

The artistic temperament, my dear! What next!

MR. CASSIDY

The idea of doing away with the furniture, which Mr. Fennell emphatically states he disliked,—and what greater proof of the fact could we have than his action in destroying it?—came to him like an inspiration, and being a true artist he seized the opportunity, and the world was made all the lovelier by the riddance of ugly things. I think, in fact, I know that I have proved that the charge of house-breaking is absurd. (*Takes out his watch, holds it in the palm of his left hand*) This watch is mine, and if I should choose to smash it into a thousand fragments, who is there to prevent me? What power has the law over such matters? None whatever. Well, it would be just as ridiculous and absurd to punish my client for smashing his own furniture, which he purchased with his own hard earned money, as to punish me for smashing this watch if I should feel like doing so. (*Applause, which is suppressed*) To charge Mr. Fennell with drinking poteen is equally absurd. He does not know what poteen tastes like. The idea of taking a decanter and a bottle of whiskey out of any gentleman's house without his permission is tyranny of the very worst kind. It is a grievous offence in the eyes of the law

as well as a breach of etiquette. What, might I ask, would happen if any of us were to break into His Worship's hotel and steal, or take if you will, some choice samples of his wines? Would we not find ourselves in a prison cell? Most assuredly we would, and what's more, our good name would be gone forever. The finger of scorn would be pointed at our children and our children's children, and posterity would never forget us.

MRS. FENNELL

'Tis only worse he's getting.

PETER DWYER

Order, order.

MR. CASSIDY

There is only one course for the Bench to adopt, and that is to discharge Mr. Fennell. He has already suffered enough and any one with such a ballyragging, unreasonable, unladylike, and headstrong wife deserves our sympathy.

MR. FENNELL (*with indignation*)

Mr. Cassidy, sir. How dare you stand up there in my presence and insult my wife! You're no gentleman, sir. Remember when you offend my wife, you offend me. Do you hear that?

MR. O'CROWLEY

This conduct is obstreperonious, Mr. Fennell. Mr. Cassidy is a gentleman, and he must not be either insulted or interrupted, while he is judiciously discharging the duties of his high office.

MRS. FENNELL (*sighs*)

Oh, God help us! The world must be turned upside down when a lawyer can be a gentleman.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Hold your tongue, woman, or I'll order you to be arrested for contempt of court.

MR. FENNELL

The next man who says a word to my wife must fight me.

[*Buttons his coat.*

PHELAN DUFFY (*to the magistrates*)

The Bench must make due allowances for the excitement of the moment.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Of course, of course, Mr. Duffy, but we must not have a reoccurrence of such conduct.

MR. FENNELL

Meself and herself pulled together all these long years, and I'll be damned if I'll allow any one to say a word to her.

[*Mrs. Fennell places a handkerchief to her eyes and commences to cry.*

MR. O'CROWLEY

Order, order, this is a court of justice, and the case must proceed without further interruption or the strictest measures of the law will be adhered to. (*Pauses, speaks to the police*) Any one who interrupts me while I'm speaking must be ejected from the court.

SERGEANT HEALY

Your Worship's orders will be obeyed.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Now, it was with the greatest of interest that I have listened to the speeches pro and con for the prisoner and never before or since have I heard such logic

and eloquence as was used in this court of justice to-day. I am nearly sure, in fact I'm certain, that since the days when Marcus Anthony delivered his matchless orations before the proud and haughty Egyptians, did such wisdom flow from the lips of any man. By the judicious application of words and logic we have learnt what uses can be made of the law of the land, and though our reason may convince us and our conscience too, that right is right and wrong is wrong, yet, the law's the law for all that, and we are Justices of the Peace and must respect the law and abide by it. Mr. Duffy has clearly proved to us how drink, especially bad and illegal drink, like poteen, can change a man from a law-abiding, self-respecting, and obedient husband into a demon and a house-breaker. And Mr. Cassidy has also clearly proven on the other hand how that same drink can change a man from the ordinary humdrum things of life and turn his mind to noble ideals, and make of him an artist and an inspired one at that. Now science has proved to us that in every one man there are two men, — the artist, if I might be permitted to use the term, and the house-breaker. But as the two men are only one man, and the artist is the better of the two, then to the artist let us pay our respects, and dismiss the charge of house-breaking.

MRS. FENNELL (*sadly*)

Ah, God help us! The town will be full of artists when the militia comes home.

MR. O'CROWLEY

The charge of house-breaking then will be dismissed, but I must impose a heavy fine and sentence for using the illegal intoxicant, poteen.

MR. CASSIDY

Will your Worship be good enough before passing sentence to make sure that the liquor is poteen?

MR. O'CROWLEY

We have it on the testimony of the sergeant that it is poteen.

MR. CASSIDY

But with all due respect to the court, we cannot convict any one on such evidence. What does the sergeant know about poteen?

SERGEANT HEALY (*indignantly*)

What do I know about poteen, is it? How dare you, sir? Was there a better maker of poteen in the County Cork than my own father, rest his soul!

MR. O'CROWLEY

Now, isn't that evidence enough for you? Does the sergeant look like a man who doesn't know the difference between a good and a bad drop of whiskey?

MR. CASSIDY (*sarcastically*)

I beg your Worship's pardon. But my client states that the evidence is insufficient, and if he should be convicted, he will bring the case before the Four Courts of Dublin.

SERGEANT HEALY

He can bring it to the four courts of — Jericho, if he likes, but that stuff in the bottle is poteen all the same.

MARTIN O'FLYNN

As Mr. Fennel is so dogmatic about this liquor not being poteen, why does he not tell us where and from whom he purchased it? (*To the sergeant*) Are you sure, Sergeant Healy, that this liquor is poteen?

SERGEANT HEALY

As well as I remember the taste of it, your Worship, it is. But perhaps 'twould be better to make sure and try again.

MARTIN O'FLYNN

Try again, then.

SERGEANT HEALY

Very well.

[*Pours out a little and drinks it, smacks his lips, but says nothing.*

MR. O'CROWLEY

Well, Sergeant, what is it?

MARTIN O'FLYNN

Is it or is it not poteen?

SERGEANT HEALY

I don't get the flavor of it yet.

[*Takes another drop.*

MR. O'CROWLEY

What is it, Sergeant, poteen or just bad whiskey?

SERGEANT HEALY

Bedad, 'tis hard to tell. Sometimes I think 'tis poteen, and sometimes I think it isn't. But whatever it is, it isn't so good as the stuff me poor father used to brew. Maybe the constable could tell us. He comes from Castletownballymacreedy, where they make the best poteen in Ireland.

[*Hands a glassful to the constable.*

CONSTABLE O'RYAN (*after drinking*)

There's not a shadow of a doubt about it being poteen, your Worship, and as fine a drop as I have tasted for many a long day.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Are you satisfied now, Mr. Cassidy?

MR. CASSIDY

I think it would be as well to have the opinion of some one else.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Constable McCarthy, let you take a toothful out of that decanter and tell us what it is.

CONSTABLE MCCARTHY

Though I am a League of the Cross man, I suppose as a matter of duty I must break me pledge.

[*Pours out a glassful and drinks.*

MR. O'CROWLEY

Well, what is it?

CONSTABLE MCCARTHY

Poteen, your Worship.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Now we have conclusive evidence that this liquor is poteen, and no more serious charge could be brought against any man than to be found guilty of using such obnoxious stuff by a court of justice. As with the law of nature, so with the law of the land. He who transgresses any of nature's laws gets duly punished according to the nature of his offence. And so also with the law of the country. Mr. Fennell must be punished, and his punishment must serve as an example to others and —

MR. CASSIDY

I beg your Worship's pardon. We do not always get punished for disobeying the laws of nature. Nature's strongest force is self-assertion, and excessive self-assertion is vanity, and vanity is sinful, and —

MARTIN O'FLYNN

You must excuse me interrupting you, Mr. Cassidy, but that train of argument cannot be followed here.

We have proved that poteen was found in the prisoner's house, and if he did not make it himself, where then did he get it from?

MR. CASSIDY

Mr. Fennel emphatically denies having anything to do with the making of the liquor found on his premises. And so far it has not been proved to either his or my satisfaction that the intoxicant is poteen.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Does your client mean for a moment to cast a reflection on the police of this town, and insinuate that they don't know what poteen is?

MR. CASSIDY

We are not satisfied with the decision of the police, your Worship.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Very well then, we'll give it a further test.

[*Gives the decanter to the clerk, Peter Dwyer.*

PETER DWYER (*after tasting it*)

If that's not poteen, may I never wet my lips with it again.

MR. O'CROWLEY (*to Mr. Cassidy*)

Perhaps you are satisfied now.

MR. CASSIDY

No, I am not.

MARTIN O'FLYNN

Well, taste it yourself and tell us what it is.

MR. CASSIDY (*tastes it*)

Whatever it is, it is not poteen.

MARTIN O'FLYNN (*pours out some in a glass*)

I'll soon settle the question. (*Drinks*) That's poteen, and good poteen too.

MR. CASSIDY

I beg to disagree with your Worship.

MARTIN O'FLYNN

How dare you disagree with me, sir, and I drinking poteen every day of my life. I'd resign my seat on the Bench rather than suffer to be insulted in such a manner again.

MR. CASSIDY

I apologise. Nothing could be further from my thought than offence.

MARTIN O'FLYNN

I'm glad to hear you say so, because when I said that the liquor in the decanter was poteen, I knew what I was talking about. Unless the prisoner tells us how he procured this illegal drink, he will be imprisoned for six months.

MR. FENNELL

For six months, is it?

MARTIN O'FLYNN

Yes, for six long months, and you must find bail for your good behavior at the end of the term for a period of twelve months.

MR. FENNELL

Well, as you are so anxious to know where I procured the stuff that you have certified to be poteen, I have great pleasure in telling you that it was purchased at Mr. Cornelius John Michael O'Crowley's establishment under the name of Scotch whiskey, and if there is any doubt about the matter, I can show you some of his own sealed bottles with the same stuff in them.

MR. O'CROWLEY

The saints protect us! What a vile fabrication!

MRS. FENNELL

Ah, you old hypocrite, 'tis about time that you were found out.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Place that woman under arrest for contempt of court. (*Mrs. Fennell is placed in the dock*) Now, Mrs. Fennell, anything that you will say will be used in evidence against you, so I warn you to hold your tongue and keep quiet.

MRS. FENNELL

I'll try and keep quiet, your Worship.

MR. O'CROWLEY

Gentlemen, I regret to state that a mistake has occurred somewhere, and there's nothing more plentiful than mistakes. They commenced long ago in the Garden of Eden, and they are as inevitable as the day and night, as inevitable, I might say, as America itself. Yes, some one has blundered, as Napoleon said when he woke up and found himself a prisoner on St. Helena. Mr. Fennell, alas! has erred, but to err is human, and to forgive is divine. We are reasonable people, and we must treat this matter in a reasonable manner. The prisoner has stated that he purchased poteen at my premises, but what reliance can we place on the word of a man who is addicted to drinking poteen? None whatever. We have only the prisoner's word that the poteen was purchased at my establishment, but the probability is that he was only suffering from its ill effects when he imagined that I was the one who supplied it. Though I'm very sorry indeed to have anything to say against Mr. Fennell, his word cannot be taken as evidence, and the case will be dismissed. (*Applause, which is suppressed*)

The dignity of the court must be upheld, and the next person who applauds will be ejected.

[*Mr. Fennell is dismissed and Mrs. Fennell placed in the dock. She goes through the usual ordeal of swearing, and Mr. O'Crowley tries her case.*

MR. O'CROWLEY

For contempt of court, Mrs. Fennell, you will be fined ten pounds, and you will be bound to the peace for twelve months, and you must give two securities of fifty pounds each, or go to jail for a term of six months with hard labor. And anything that you may say after the sentence of the court has been passed, of a disparaging nature to the Bench, will be considered as a necessity for further punishment. I hope that I have made myself perfectly clear.

MRS. FENNELL

Yes, your Worship, you have made yourself perfectly clear. (*Starts to cry*) Oh, what will I do at all? Is there no one to go bail for me? (*Mr. Fennell looks like one who is trying to come to a decision, and Mrs. Fennell starts to cry again*) Is it the way that ye'll be having me taken to the county jail for doing nothing at all? Oh, wisha, who's going to go bail for me? Maybe 'tis yourself, Mr. O'Crowley.

MR. FENNELL (*walking up to the dock*)

And I here, is it? Not for likely. I'll go bail for you, of course.

CURTAIN

MAGNANIMITY

A Comedy in One Act

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM DRISCOLL.....*A public-house keeper*
DENNIS LOGAN
BERNARD FALVEY
GARRET DEVLIN
BARRY NAGLE
POLICE AND TOWNSPEOPLE

MAGNANIMITY

A Comedy in One Act

Scene: Back parlor of a country public house. The proprietor, William Driscoll, a man of about fifty with a very dour expression, sings as he sweeps the floor:

"Oh, the days are gone, when Beauty bright
My heart's chain wove;
When the dream of life from morn till night
Was love, still love.
New hope may bloom,
And days may come
Of milder, calmer beam,
But there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream.
No, there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream."

[*Logan, a stranger, enters.*

LOGAN

Good mornin'.

DRISCOLL

Good mornin' and good luck. What can I do for you?

LOGAN

I'll have a glass of the best whiskey.

DRISCOLL

All right, my good man. You shall get it.

[*Exit.*

LOGAN (*takes up the morning paper, sits on the table, and speaks aloud*)

Be the pipers that played the dead march for Moses, but I'm twice as big a fool as I thought I was. And knowledge of that sort is cold comfort for any man. What's this I see here? "Daring burglary in the town of Castlemorgan. During the early hours of the morning, the house of Michael Cassily was broken into, and five pound notes, a gentleman's watch and a pair of silver candlesticks were stolen. So far, no arrests have been made, but the police have every hope of bringing those who committed the offence to justice, because Mr. Cassily states that he saw two men leaving by the back entrance, and found a piece of a coat-tail hanging from a nail on the porch."

[*He lifts up his coat, and discovers a piece missing from the tail, and is about to take it off for a closer inspection when the publican enters with the whiskey.*

DRISCOLL (*as he places the whiskey upon the table*)

This is your drink, stranger, and believe me, you couldn't get a better drop of whiskey in the whole United Kingdom, not even if you went to the King's palace itself for it.

LOGAN

'Tis good, you say.

DRISCOLL

None better, and wonderful stuff to put heart into a man.

LOGAN (*drinks it off*)

'Tis the good flavor it has surely. (*Pauses awhile*) I think I'll have another, for 'tis plenty of heart I'll be wantin' before the day goes to its close.

DRISCOLL

'Tis easy to feel plucky in the mornin', but 'tis a brave man who can feel happy at the heel of day, especially if he has an uneasy conscience and an empty stomach.

LOGAN

Hunger plays the devil with us all. A man with an empty stomach, an empty purse, and an empty house, except for a scoldin' wife, can never be happy.

DRISCOLL

That's so, but if that's all you have to contend with, you haven't much to worry about. Sure I thought by your looks and the way you spoke that you might have killed a man and had the bloodhounds after you.

LOGAN

A man's conscience is worse than having bloodhounds after him, if he has to spend months in idleness through no fault of his own, and no one to look for sympathy from but a scoldin' wife.

DRISCOLL

The Lord protect us from scoldin' wives, anyway. They're the scourge of Hell. But there are worse things than being married to a wife with no control over her temper. You might be like the thief who broke into the house of Michael Cassily and stole his grandfather's watch and chain and silver candlestick.

LOGAN

And when did all this happen?

DRISCOLL

During the small hours of the mornin'.

LOGAN

That was a damnable thing to do.

DRISCOLL

'Twas more foolish than anythin' else, because, if Michael Cassily should ever lay hands upon the man who stole his belongings, he'd shoot at him the way you'd shoot at a rabbit in a ditch and kill him as dead as one of Egypt's kings.

LOGAN

The Lord save us! You don't mean what you say.

DRISCOLL

I do, and every word of it. And a sure shot he is too. Indeed 'tis said that nothing in the sky or on the land could escape him when he has a gun in his hand.

LOGAN

I heard before comin' to this town that he was a very quiet and inoffensive man.

DRISCOLL

And so he is a quiet man when he's left alone. But when his temper is up, the devil himself is a gentleman to him.

LOGAN

I'll have another glass of whiskey.

[*Exit the publican. While he is away, Logan looks at the torn part of his coat, and a stranger enters.*

BARNARD FALVEY (*saunters into the back kitchen, picks a piece of wet paper off the floor, and tries to light it at the fire for the purpose of lighting his pipe, and after several unsuccessful attempts, he turns to Logan*)

Good mornin', and God bless you, stranger.

LOGAN

Good mornin', kindly.

FALVEY

It looks as though we were goin' to have a spell of fine weather.

LOGAN

Judgin' by the way the wind is, it would seem so.

FALVEY

'Tis splendid weather for walkin' or tillin' the land.

LOGAN

'Tis good weather for anythin'.

FALVEY

All the same, 'tis a long stretch of a road from here to Ballinore. How far is it, I wonder?

LOGAN

Twenty miles at least.

FALVEY

Every step of it, and a long road for a man with the rheumatics and bronchitis too.

LOGAN

And what brought you from Ballinore?

FALVEY

And what would bring any poor man from his native town but lookin' for work. And that's a hard thing to be doin' when a man hasn't a friend to help him towards a job.

LOGAN

A man can always make friends if he wants to.

FALVEY

'Tis no easy thing for a man who hasn't a sleutherin' tongue and the takin' way with him to make friends, stranger.

LOGAN

'Tis easy enough to make fine weather friends. But I suppose a friend isn't worth a damn unless he can help a man when he's in trouble.

FALVEY

To have a lot of money is the easiest way of makin'

friends. But when a man hasn't either money or the sleutherin' tongue, he can't expect to have any more of the world's goods than myself.

LOGAN

And have you no friends at all among all the millions of people on the face of the earth?

FALVEY

The devil a one ever bothers their head about me but myself. And what I can do for myself is hardly worth doin' for any one.

LOGAN

After all, when a man has his health and enough to eat, he should be contented.

FALVEY

But how could you expect the likes of me to be contented when I didn't break my fast this blessed day yet, and all I have in the world is the bit of tobacco you see in my old pipe, and unless you're not as dacent as you look, 'tis hungry maybe I'll be until I find a turnip field before the fall of night.

LOGAN

Would you drink a pint of porter and eat a penny bun?

FALVEY

Indeed I would, and remember the one in my prayers who'd give them to me.

LOGAN (*knocks and the publican enters*)

Bring this man a pint of porter and give him one of the penny buns or two that you have on the porter barrel in the shop.

DRISCOLL

Indeed I will and much good may they do him.

[*Places pint of porter and bread in front of Falvey who begins to eat and drink.*

FALVEY

God bless your noble soul and may you be long spared to do good in the world. (*As he eats*) There's no sauce like hunger, and no friend like the friend in need.

LOGAN

That's true. Now tell me, do you expect to get work in this town?

FALVEY

'Tis my intention to try.

LOGAN

You'd have as much chance of slippin' into heaven with your soul as black as a skillet from mortal sins, unknownst to St. Peter, as you'd have of gettin' a job with an old coat like that.

FALVEY

And what can I do, God help me, when I have no other?

LOGAN

I'll swap with you, and then you'll have some chance, but otherwise you might as well walk back to where you came from.

FALVEY

But I couldn't take a coat from a strange gentleman like yourself and have an easy conscience. Sure, this old coat of mine is only fit to be used for a scarecrow.

LOGAN

You're a fool to be talkin' like that, stranger. Don't you know that you must take all you can get and give away as little as you can if you want to be successful in life?

FALVEY

And why, then, should you be givin' me your coat when you want it yourself?

LOGAN

You had better say no more, lest I might change my mind. Sure, 'tis sorry I may be to-night when I'm facing the cold winds on the lonely roads that I exchanged my fine warm coat for an old threadbare garment that a rag man wouldn't give a child a lump of candy for.

FALVEY

Sure, St. Francis himself couldn't do more, and he that tore his coat in two and shared it with the beggars.

LOGAN

'Tis easy for a saint of God to be good, when he feels that he'll be rewarded for his self-sacrifice, but have no more old talk and give me that old coat of yours, or if you don't I might change my mind, and then you'll have plenty of time to regret your foolishness.

FALVEY

Very well, stranger, very well. (*They exchange coats*) May the Lord spare you all the days you want to live, and may you never want for anythin' but the ill wishes of your enemies.

LOGAN

That coat makes you look like a gentleman, and if you only had a better hat, and a good shave, you might get some old widow with a small farm to marry you, if you are a bachelor.

FALVEY

Of course I'm a bachelor. Who'd be bothered with the likes of me for a husband. Sure, I wouldn't raise my hand to a woman in a thousand years, and what do women care about a man unless he can earn lots of money and leather the devil out of them when they don't behave themselves?

LOGAN

That's true. And when a man hasn't any money to give his wife, the next best thing to do is to give her a good beatin'.

FALVEY

That's what my father used to say. But 'tis the lucky thing for me all the same that I'm not married, an' that I strayed into a house like this to-day. Yet I don't think 'tis a bit fair for me to be wearin' your fine coat and you wearin' mine. You don't look a bit comfortable in it.

LOGAN

I feel comfortable, and far more comfortable than you can imagine; and after all that's what matters. Every eye forms its own beauty, and when the heart is young, it doesn't matter how old you are.

FALVEY

That's true! That's true! But 'tis the dacent man you are, nevertheless, and 'tisn't the likes of you that a poor man like myself meets every day.

LOGAN

No, and it may be a long time again before you will meet another like me. But be that as it may, I must be going now, so here's a shillin' for you and go to the barber's next door and have a shave before startin' to look for work. (*Hands shilling*) Good-by.

FALVEY

Good-by, God bless you and long life to you.

[*Exit Logan. Enter an old friend.*

GARRET DEVLIN (*walks slowly and takes the newspaper from the table, looks at the clock*)

Only half-past ten, and damn the bit to do. Ah, me! ah, me! One bloody day like another!

[*Sits on the chair and yawns. Knocks for the publican. Enter Driscoll.*

DRISCOLL

Good mornin', Garret. Anythin' new to-day?

DEVLIN

Yes, I have good news this mornin'.

DRISCOLL

An' what is it?

DEVLIN

Oh, not much, only that a grand-uncle of mine is after dyin' in America and leavin' me a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds.

DRISCOLL (*sceptically*)

That's a terrible responsibility for a poor man to have thrust upon him. What are you going to do with it at all?

DEVLIN

Well, I was thinkin' of buyin' a new suit of clothes and dividin' what's left between the poor of the town, the Sisters of Charity, and the Salvation Army.

DRISCOLL

Wisha, I'm sick and tired of hearin' old yarns like that. I suppose 'tis the way that you want a half a glass of whiskey and haven't the price of it.

DEVLIN

How dare you insinuate such a thing. (*Places a sovereign on the table*) Give me a half a whiskey and no more old talk out of you.

DRISCOLL

And where did you get all that money?

DEVLIN

That's my business. I got it from the captain in the

Salvation Army when I told him how much money I was goin' to give him by and by.

DRISCOLL

Well, that's the first and last donation you'll ever get from the Salvation Army. Sure, if you got all the money that was to be left to you since I knew you first, you'd be buildin' libraries all over the world like Carnegie to advertise your vanity.

DEVLIN

'Tis nothin' to you whether I will build libraries or public houses for the poor when I'll get all the money that's comin' to me.

DRISCOLL

Ah, wisha, I'm about sick and tired of hearin' all the things you're going to do.

DEVLIN (*crossly*)

I don't give a damn whether you are or not. Go and get me the whiskey, or I'll get it elsewhere.

DRISCOLL (*plausibly*)

Very well, very well! I'll get you the whiskey.

[*Exit.*

DEVLIN (*to Falvey, who is still eating his loaf of bread*)

Good mornin', stranger.

FALVEY

Good mornin' and good luck, sir.

DEVLIN

'Tis a fine mornin'.

FALVEY

A glorious mornin', thank God.

DEVLIN

Is that your breakfast that you're eatin'?

FALVEY

Indeed it is, stranger, and maybe my dinner and supper too.

DEVLIN

'Tis the hell of a thing to be poor.

FALVEY

Sure 'tis myself that knows it.

DEVLIN

And 'tis as bad to be rich and not to be able to get any of your money like myself.

FALVEY

There's trouble in everythin', but no respect for the poor.

DEVLIN

None whatever! none whatever! And no greater misfortune could befall a man than to be poor and honest at the same time. But all the same I'll be a millionaire when my money comes from America.

FALVEY

America must be a great country. One man is as good as another there, I believe.

DEVLIN

So they say, when both of them have nothin'. (*Looking hard at the stranger*) Tell me, haven't I seen you somewhere before? What's that your name is?

FALVEY

My name is Bernard Falvey, and I come from Ballinore.

DEVLIN

Well, well, to be sure, and I'm Garret Devlin, your mother's first cousin! Who'd ever think of meetin' you here. The world is a small place after all!

FALVEY

It must be fifteen or more years since last we met.

DEVLIN

Every day of it. And what have you been doing since? I'd hardly know you at all, the way you have changed.

FALVEY

Workin' when I wasn't idle and idle when I wasn't workin', but in trouble all the time.

DEVLIN

You're like myself. I too only exchange one kind of trouble for another. When I got married I had to live with the wife's mother for two years, and when she died, I had to support my widowed sister-in-law's three children. And when they were rared and fit to be earnin' for themselves and be a help to me, they got drowned. Then my poor wife lost her senses, and I haven't had peace or ease ever since. She thinks that she is the Queen of England, and that I'm the King.

FAVLEY

An' have you no children?

DEVLIN

One boy.

FALVEY

An' what does he do for a livin'?

DEVLIN

He's a private in the militia, and his mother thinks he's the Prince of Wales.

FALVEY

God help us all, but 'tis the queer things that happen to the poor.

DEVLIN

An' what are you doin' in these parts?

FALVEY

Lookin' for work.

DEVLIN

An' that itself is the worst kind of hardship. I don't think that there's much doin' these times for the natives, not to mention the strangers, though 'tis the strangers get the pickings wherever they go. We'll have a look at the newspaper and see what's doin' anyway. (*Reads from the advertisement columns*) "Wanted a respectable man, to act as a coachman to His Lordship the Bishop. He must have a good appearance, have sober habits, and a knowledge of horses and the ways of the clergy."

That won't do.

"Wanted, a young man of dashing appearance, with a good vocabulary to act as travelling salesman, must be well recommended, and have a thorough knowledge of the dry goods business."

That won't do either.

"Wanted, a middle-aged man to act as companion to an invalid. He must have a knowledge of French and German, and be able to play the violin."

That won't do.

"Wanted a man to make himself generally useful at an undertaker's establishment. Apply to Michael Cassily. William O'Brien St."

Bedad, but that's the very job for you.

FALVEY

But how am I to get it?

DEVLIN

I'll give you a letter of introduction to Micky Cassily. He's an old friend of mine.

FALVEY

Sure, that would be a great thing entirely.

DEVLIN

Wait now, and I'll make a man of you, and if you should ever become Lord Mayor of Cork or Dublin, you must not forget me.

FALVEY

Indeed, I'll never be able to forget this blessed day, and the kindness of the people I have met in Castlemorgan.

[*Knocks for the publican, and walks up and down; when the publican enters, he assumes an air of great importance.*

DRISCOLL

What's the matter?

DEVLIN

I want you to oblige me with a few sheets of note paper, a bottle of ink, and a writin' pen.

DRISCOLL

And what do you want them for?

DEVLIN

To write a letter of introduction for this poor man here. He's lookin' for work, and I want to help him to get it.

DRISCOLL

Then I'll give them to you with pleasure.

[*Exit.*

DEVLIN

You needn't worry any more. I'll get a job for you. Micky and myself are old friends. He buried my father and mother and all belongin' to me. And although I do say it myself, there isn't a better undertaker from here to Dublin. He's as good a judge of a

dead man as any one you ever met, and could measure the size of a coffin without using the tape at all.

[*Enter Driscoll.*

DRISCOLL (*as he places writing materials on the table*) Here's the writing material, and may good luck attend you.

DEVLIN

Thank you, very much. (*To Falvey*) Now to business.

[*They both sit at the table, and Devlin commences to write.*

Deadwoman's Hill,
Goulnaspurra.

Dear Mr. Cassily:

I have the hon — how's that you spell honour? — h-o-n-n-o-u-r, of course. Yes, that's right. I have the honour, and likewise the (*pauses*) unprecedented — that's not an easy word to spell — u-n-p-r-ee-s-c-ee-d-e-n-t-e-d — that wasn't such a hard word after all, and it looks fine in print (*repeats*) unprecedented and the great pleasure — that spells p-l-e-a-s-u-r — of introducing, that's a stumbler of a word, — i-n-t-r-d — (*to Falvey*) Can you spell the rest of it?

FALVEY

i-n-t-e-r-w-e-i-n —

DEVLIN

No. That's not right. We had better call Bill Driscoll. Are you there, Bill?

[*Enter Driscoll.*

DRISCOLL

What's the matter?

DEVLIN

We want you to spell "introducing."

DRISCOLL (*wiping a pint measure*)

With pleasure. (*Confidently*) i-n-t-u-r-d-e-w-c-i-n-g.

DEVLIN

Are you sure that is right?

DRISCOLL

Of course I am. What do you think I went to school for?

DEVLIN

Very well, I'll take your word for it. But stay here awhile, because we may want your assistance soon again. This is an important matter, and we must give all our attention to it. I have the honor and likewise the unprecedented and the great pleasure of introducing to you a cousin of my own on my mother's side, one Barney Falvey. He is a man of many and n-e-w-m-e-r-o-w-s. (*To Driscoll*) Isn't that right?

DRISCOLL

That's all right. Proceed.

DEVLIN

— numerous a-c-o-m-p-l-i-s-h-m-e-n-t-s. That sounds wrong, doesn't it?

DRISCOLL

It sounds wrong, but let it go. No one will ever notice the mistake, when we can't find it out ourselves.

DEVLIN

He has an i-n-g-a-n-o-s turn of mind, and can do all kinds of hard or easy work. He can p-l-o-w a field, milk a cow, mind childer, and make nearly every thing from a bird cage, a mousetrap, or a snuff box, to a coffin. He is w-i-l-i-n, o-b-l-i-g-i-n, and can put up with all kinds of abuse. He can look i-n-o-s-c-e-n-t or guilty, as the occasion may require and will, I'm sure, and certain, taking his accomplishments all

round, prove to be the very man you are lookin' for to fill the v-a-k-a-n-c-y in your highly respected e-s-t-a-b-l-i-shment. Anythin' you can do for him will be considered a personal f-a-v-o-u-r by your old and e-s-t-e-a-m-ed friend,

Garret Devlin.

[*He reads it over again aloud.*

"Deadwoman's Hill,
Goulnaspurra.

"Dear Mr. Cassily:

"I have the honour and likewise the unprecedented and great pleasure of introducin' to you a cousin of my own on my mother's side, one Barney Falvey. He is a man of many parts and numerous accomplishments. He has an ingenious turn of mind and can do all kinds of hard and easy work. He can plow a field, milk a cow, mind childer, and make nearly everythin' from a bird cage, a mousetrap, or a snuff box, to a coffin. He is willin' and obligin' and can put up with all kinds of abuse. He can look innocent or guilty as the occasion may require, and will, I am certain and confident, taking his accomplishments all round, prove to be the very man you are lookin' for to fill the vacancy in your highly respected establishment. Anythin' that you can do for him will be considered a personal favour by your old and esteemed friend,

"Garret Devlin."

That's a great letter. Be God, sure 'twould nearly get the job for myself. But it would never do for one of my social standin' to take such a position in this town.

FALVEY

'Tis a great thing to be able to put so many words together on paper. And 'tis the wonderful gift to have surely. A man that could write like you should be a secretary to the Lord Lieutenant himself, or writin' sermons for the Pope of Rome.

DEVLIN

Now, no more old palaver, talk is cheap, but it takes money to buy whiskey. Look as smart as you can (*hands letter*), and deliver this letter before it's too late. There's nothin' like doin' things with despatch when you're in a hurry. Wait, your face is none too clean. Where's your handkerchief? (*Hands him an old dirty handkerchief. He drains the dregs of a pewter pint on the handkerchief, and wipes his face with it. Then he looks at Falvey's boots*) Glory be to God! but you're a very careless man! When did you clean these boots last?

FALVEY

Wisha, who could keep boots clean upon the dirty roads.

[*Takes off his old hat and wipes his boots with it.*

DEVLIN

That's better. Now take off that old tie, and I'll give you mine. But you must return it to me when you get the job. It belonged to my grandfather, and it always brought luck to the family.

[*They exchange ties, and Devlin's toilet is completed by brushing the legs of his old trousers with a sweeping brush.*

DEVLIN (*looking at him approvingly*)

If you always kept yourself as respectable lookin' as that, you would never want for work, I'm thinkin'.

FALVEY (*looking at himself in an old mirror*)
There's somethin' in what you say. Sure my mother always told me I was the best lookin' in the family.

DEVLIN
That may be, but your beauty isn't of the fatal kind. (*Shaking hands with him*) Good luck now, and I'll wait here until you'll return.

FALVEY
God bless you, God bless you, I'll be back as soon as I can.
[*Exit.*

DEVLIN (*knocks and orders another half of whiskey*)
Another half one. That letter took a lot out of me.

DRISCOLL
Literature, they say, is always a great strain on a man's vitality. I was offered a job as proof reader on a newspaper one time, but my friends advised me not to take it.

DEVLIN
Your friends were wise. Stayin' up at night is bad for any man. 'Tis hard enough to be up in the mornin' without bein' up at night as well.

DRISCOLL (*places drink on table*)
That's true.
[*Exit. A man of about forty-five enters, with a pint of porter in his hand. He sits near Devlin.*

BARRY NAGLE
Good mornin', stranger.

DEVLIN
Good mornin'.

NAGLE
'Tis a fine day for this time of year.

DEVLIN

This would be a fine day for any part of the year.

NAGLE

Fine weather is the least of the good things that the poor is entitled to.

DEVLIN

The poor have their wants, of course, but the rich, bad luck and misfortune to them one and all, have their troubles also, because they don't know what they want, the discontented, lazy, good-for-nothin' varmints. May they all perish be their own folly before the world or their money comes to an end.

NAGLE

'Tis only the poor who knows how bad the rich are. And only the rich that can be hard on the poor. Have you a match, if you please?

DEVLIN (*handing a box*)

You'll find plenty in that.

NAGLE

All the comfort some of us have in this world is a smoke, that's when we have the tobacco, of course.

DEVLIN

There'll be smokin' enough in the next world, they say, but that's cold comfort to a man without the fillin's of a pipe or a match to light it.

NAGLE

'Tis a great misfortune to be born at all.

DEVLIN

That's what I've often been thinkin'. And many's the time I've cursed the day that my father met my mother. (*Sadly*) 'Twould be better for us all in spite of what the clergy say that we were all Protestants,

or else died before we came to the use of reason. But things might be worse.

NAGLE

Trouble comes to us all, and 'tis a consolation to know that the King must die as well as the beggar. Think of me, and I after losin' my return ticket to Carlow, and I must be there to-night even if I have to walk every step of the way.

DEVLIN

And haven't you the price of your ticket?

NAGLE

The devil a penny at all have I, and unless I can sell my watch to buy my ticket with, I'll lose my job, and then my wife and family must go to the workhouse.

DEVLIN

God himself seems to be no friend of the poor. That was a terrible calamity to befall a stranger. How much will your ticket cost?

NAGLE

Ten shillin's, and I'm willin' to part with my watch for that triflin' sum, though 'twas my poor father's, rest his soul. (*Holds watch in his hand*) Look at it, 'tis as fine a timepiece as eyes ever rested on. A solid silver watch, and a chain of solid gold, and all for ten shillin's. And history enough attached to it to write a book.

DEVLIN

'Tis a bargain surely.

NAGLE

A man wearin' a watch and chain like that would get credit anywhere he'd be known, though 'twould be no use to a stranger.

DEVLIN

Leave me see how 'twould look on me. (*The stranger hands him the watch, and Devlin adjusts it to his vest front, walks up and down the room, and looks in the glass*) Bedad, but you're right. It does make a man feel good, and maybe better than he is.

NAGLE

A man walkin' into a friend's house with ornamentation on him like that would get the lend of anythin'.

DEVLIN (*confidently*)

I believe he would.

NAGLE

Indeed you may say so.

DEVLIN

And you'll sell it for ten shillin's.

NAGLE

Yes, if you'll be quick about it, because I must catch the train and get home as soon as I can.

DEVLIN

Does it keep good time?

NAGLE

'Tis the best timekeeper that ever was.

DEVLIN (*places watch to his ear*)

It has a good strong tick, anyway. I'll give you the ten shillin's for it. Here you are.

NAGLE (*takes the money*)

Thank you kindly, though it nearly breaks my heart to part with it.

DEVLIN

Life is made up of comin' and goin', and what we lose to-day we may gain to-morrow, and lose again the next day.

NAGLE

One man's loss is another man's profit, and that's how the world keeps movin'.

DEVLIN

True. And there's no use in being alive unless we can help each other. Sure 'tis for each other, and not by each other, that we should live.

NAGLE

'Pon my word, but to know how to live is the greatest problem of all.

DEVLIN

That's so. Sometimes 'tis foolish to be wise and other times 'tis wise to be foolish, but the sensible man will always look out for himself and let his friends look after his enemies.

NAGLE

Every word you say is true, but I must be goin' or I'll lose the train. So I'll bid you good-by and good luck.

DEVLIN

Good day and good luck to you also. (*Exit Nagle*) The stranger was right. A man with a watch and chain like this, and able to tell every one the time of day, could get as much on his word as he'd want.

[*Buttons his coat and takes up the newspaper, sits in the chair and commences to read. He is soon disturbed by the entrance of Bernard Falvey, Michael Cassily, two policemen, and several of the townspeople.*

FIRST POLICEMAN (*pointing to Devlin*)

Is this the man who gave you the letter of introduction?

FALVEY

That's the man who has brought all this trouble on me, but I'm as innocent as the babe unborn of the charge of burglary.

FIRST POLICEMAN

Hold your tongue, I say. What greater proof could we have than the torn coat which you're wearin'?

FALVEY

I tell you that I got this coat from a stranger I met in this house, this mornin'.

FIRST POLICEMAN

And sure you're the one who can look innocent, believe me. But this won't be much good to you when you go before the magistrates. Now we'll deal with your partner. (*Places his hand on Devlin's shoulder*) I must arrest you on suspicion for being an accomplice of this strange man here who broke into Mr. Michael Cassily's establishment last night, and stole five pound notes, two silver candlesticks and a silver watch and golden chain.

DEVLIN

Is it madness that has come upon the crowd of you? Me that never stole anythin' in my life, to be accused of robbin' from a dacent man like Michael Cassily!

SECOND POLICEMAN

Search him, constable.

FIRST POLICEMAN

Of course, I will. (*He opens his coat, finds the watch and chain, takes it off, hands it to Michael Cassily*) Is that yours?

CASSILY

Yes, constable, that's the watch and chain that was stolen from my house this mornin'.

FIRST POLICEMAN

What have you to say for yourself now?

DEVLIN

Nothin', only that I paid ten shillin's to a stranger less than half an hour ago.

FIRST POLICEMAN

And where did you get the ten shillin's, you that haven't had ten shillin's of your own altogether for ten years, but always borrowin' money and tellin' the people that you are goin' to inherit a fortune from America?

DEVLIN

'Tis the truth I'm tellin' you.

FIRST POLICEMAN

Nonsense, nonsense. What greater proof could we have of your guilt? This man here who you gave the letter of introduction is a stranger to the town and the piece of cloth that Mr. Cassily found hangin' on a nail in his back porch after the burglary was committed, is the piece of cloth that is missin' from this man's coat. (*Fits the piece of cloth*) And we have found the identical watch and chain on your own person.

SECOND POLICEMAN

'Twas a clever scheme of the pair of them and no doubt about it.

CASSILY

I never thought that any one could add insult to injury in such a manner. I was always a friend to you, Garret Devlin, and you tried to get this man who had already robbed me, a position in my establishment so that he could rob me all the more.

FALVEY

As sure as my great-grandfather is dead and gone, I

tell you that I got this coat from a stranger in this very house.

DEVLIN

And as sure as the devil has paid a visit this blessed day to Castlemorgan, I tell you I bought that watch and chain from a stranger also. William Driscoll will prove that there were two such men in his house.

FIRST POLICEMAN

If William Driscoll says a word in your defence, he'll be arrested on suspicion also. (*To the publican*) What have you to say?

DRISCOLL

Not a word, constable, not a word. I know nothin' at all about the matter except readin' the account of the dreadful affair in the mornin' paper.

[*First policeman places the handcuffs on both, and walks them towards the door.*

DEVLIN

What's goin' to happen to us at all, at all?

FIRST POLICEMAN

The judge will tell you that at the next assizes.

CURTAIN

MATCHMAKERS

A Comedy in One Act

CHARACTERS

DONAL CORCORAN . . . . . *A farmer*
MARY ELLEN CORCORAN . . . . *Wife of Donal Corcoran*
KITTY CORCORAN . . . . . *Daughter of Ellen and Donal Corcoran*
DENIS DELAHUNTY . . . . . *A farmer*
ANASTATIA DEALHUNTY . . . . . *Wife of Denis Delahunty*
CONSTABLE DUNLEA . . . . . *A member of the R. I. C.*

MATCHMAKERS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

Place: An island off the West coast of Ireland.

Scene: Interior of Donal Corcoran's house. Donal and his wife seated in two comfortable armchairs by the parlour fire. The parlour is well furnished, and Kitty is busy dusting, as visitors are expected. Donal is a man of about fifty-six years, and his wife is a little younger. Donal is reading a copy of the Galway Examiner, and his wife is knitting a stocking.

DONAL (*as he stretches the paper in front of him. With a look of surprise*)

Glory be to God!

MRS. CORCORAN (*who does not notice his attitude or expression*)

Amen!

DONAL (*holds the paper with one hand, and brushes the hair from his forehead with the other*)

Is it the way that I'm dreamin', or losin' my senses? Or is it the way I have no senses to lose?

MRS. CORCORAN (*looking up from her knitting*)

Wisha, what's the matter, at all? Did any one die and leave you a fortune?

DONAL

Who the devil would die and leave me anything? when I have no one belongin' to me but poor relations. Bad luck to them, and they only waitin' for myself to die, so that they could have what I worked and

slaved for all those long and weary years. But 'tisn't much there will be for any one after Kitty gets her dowry. What's left will be little enough for ourselves, I'm thinkin'.

MRS. CORCORAN

But what have you seen in the newspaper?

DONAL (*reads*)

Baronetcy for the chairman of the Innismore Board of Guardians. His Majesty the King has been pleased to confer a Royal favour on the worthy and exemplary Denis Delahunty, who in future will be known as Sir Denis Delahunty, Bart., in recognition of his services to the people of Innismore. It was with a feelin' of pride and admiration that —

MRS. CORCORAN (*as she drops the stocking on the floor, lifts the spectacles from her nose, and places them on her brow*)

The Lord protect and save us all! Is it the truth, I wonder?

DONAL (*handing paper*)

See for yourself, woman.

MRS. CORCORAN (*grabs the paper and scans it with interest*)

Sure enough, there it is, then, with five lines of large black letters and two columns of small letters besides, and his photograph as well. (*To Kitty*) Look Kitty, darlin', look. There 'tis all. Sit down and read it aloud for us. 'Twill sound better that way.

KITTY (*takes the paper and smiles. Falls on a chair nearly overcome with laughter. The parents look on in amazement*)

Sir Denis Delahunty! (*Laughs heartily*)

DONAL

What are you laughin' at? You impudent hussy!

KITTY (*still laughing*)

Sir Denis Delahunty, Bart., my dear!

DONAL

Yes, yes, Sir Denis Delahunty. And what about it?

KITTY

Dinny Delahunty, the old caubogue, a baronet, and no less! (*Laughs*)

DONAL

I'll have no more of this laughin', I say. What at all, are you amused at, I'd like to know?

KITTY

Oh, father, sure 'tis a blessing that some one has a sense of humour, like myself and the King. And 'twas the great laugh he must have had to himself, when he made a baronet of Dinny Delahunty. Not to mention all the other shoneens and huxters, from here to Bantry.

DONAL

How dare you speak to me like that, miss, when 'tis yourself that will be Lady Delahunty one of these fine days. Dinny, I mean, Sir Denis himself, is comin' here to-night to make a match with his son, Finbarr.

KITTY

Wisha, indeed, now! And who told you I am going to wed Finbarr Delahunty? And he a more miserable shoneen than his old crawthumping humbug of a father.

DONAL

If you'll speak as disrespectfully as that again about any of my friends you'll be sorry for it. 'Tis I'm tellin' you that you are to wed Finbarr Delahunty and that's information enough for you, my damsel.

KITTY

I'll spare you the trouble of picking a man for me, father.

MRS. CORCORAN

Don't be disobedient, Kitty. You must remember that I never laid eyes on your father until the mornin' I met him at the altar rails.

KITTY

You should be ashamed to acknowledge the like, mother.

DONAL

Ashamed of me, is it? The father that rared and schooled you!

KITTY

I have said nothing at all to offend you, father. But I have already told you that I am going to pick a husband for myself.

DONAL

You are goin' to pick a husband for yourself! Are you, indeed? Ah, sure 'tis the stubbornness of your mother's people that's in you.

MRS. CORCORAN (*as she keeps knitting*)

And her father's, too.

DONAL

What's that you're saying, woman?

MRS. CORCORAN

I said that 'twas from your side of the family that she brought the stubbornness.

DONAL

How dare you say that, and in my presence, too? The devil blast the one belongin' to me was ever stubborn. She's her mother's daughter, I'm tellin' you.

MRS. CORCORAN

Whatever is gentle in her comes from me, and what's stubborn and contrary comes from you and yours.

DONAL (*in a rage*)

God be praised and glorified! What's gentle in her, will you tell me? She that pleases herself in everythin'. (*To Kitty*) I'll knock the stubbornness out of you, my young lady, before we will have another full moon.

MRS. CORCORAN

Indeed and you won't, then, nor in ten full moons, either.

DONAL (*as he walks up and down the kitchen*)

Woman! woman! woman! You are all alike! Every damn one of you, from the Queen to the cockle picker.

KITTY

You have no right to marry me to any one against my will.

DONAL

And is it the way I'd be leavin' you marry some good-for-nothing idle jackeen, who couldn't buy a ha'porth of bird seed for a linnet or a finch, let alone to keep a wife? That's what a contrary, headstrong, uncontrollable whipster like you would do, if you had your own way. But, be God, you will have little of your own way while I am here and above ground.

KITTY

If stubbornness was a virtue, you'd be a saint, father, and they'd have your picture in all the stained glass windows in every church in the country, like St. Patrick or St. Columkille, himself.

MRS. CORCORAN (*laughs at Kitty's answer*)

Well, well, well, to be sure! You are your father's daughter, Kitty.

DONAL

She's the devil's daughter, I'm thinkin'.

[*A loud knocking is heard at the door. Kitty opens it and Denis Delahunty enters. He is dressed in a new frock coat and top hat.*

MRS. CORCORAN AND DONAL (*as he enters*)

Welcome, Sir Denis, welcome. (*They both shake hands with him*) Our heartiest congratulations, and warmest respects.

DONAL (*pointing to his own chair*)

Take my own chair, the best in the house, that I wouldn't offer to the Bishop or the Lord Lieutenant himself, if either of them called to see me.

[*Sir Denis sits down, but forgets to remove his hat, which is much too small, and tilted to one side. When Kitty sees the strange figure he cuts, she laughs outright, at which her father gets very angry.*

DONAL (*to Kitty*)

What are you laughin' at? You brazen creature!

KITTY (*laughing*)

Sir Denis has on some one else's tall hat.

SIR DENIS (*looks very bored, removes the hat and says rather sadly*)

You are mistaken, my child. Badly mistaken! 'Tis my own hat. 'Twas the only one in the town that I could get that came near fittin' me, and herself, I mean Lady Delahunty, wouldn't leave me out without it.

KITTY

I hope that you feel more comfortable than you look, Sir Denis.

SIR DENIS

To tell the truth, Kitty, I don't know whether 'tis on my head or my heels I'm standin'. The devil a one of

me was ever aware that His Majesty the King knew or thought so much about me. If I was only made a mere knight inself, it wouldn't be so bad; but think of bein' made a whole baronet all of a sudden like that, and not knowin' a bit about it beforehand.

DONAL

You are the lucky man, Sir Denis, but don't know it.

SIR DENIS

I suppose I am, Donal. At one stroke of his sword, so to speak, the King of, well, we might say of half the whole world, put an unbridgeable gulf between herself, I mean Lady Delahunty, and myself, and the common people forever and forever!

KITTY (*laughing*)

May the Lord forgive him.

DONAL

I suppose you must present yourself at Court and have tea with the Queen herself?

MRS. CORCORAN

Sure, of course, he must be presented at Court, and the Queen with a crown of glitterin' jewels on her head will bow to him, the same as if he was the Rajah of Ballyslattery, himself, and he with his ten thousand wives and numerous attendants. And for all we know, maybe 'tis the way he'll be invitin' the whole Royal Family to spend the summer with himself and Lady Delahunty at Innismore.

SIR DENIS

'Tis the great responsibility that has been thrust upon herself, I mean Lady Delahunty, and myself surely. But we have made no plans, so far, for the entertainment of Royalty, and their conspicuous aide-de-camps.

KITTY

Aides-de-camp, you mean, I suppose, Sir Denis.

DONAL

How dare you correct Sir Denis?

SIR DENIS

However, I suppose in time we will get accustomed to our new surroundin's and environment. The Prince of Wales, they say, is hard to please, but I have no doubt that he will be glad to meet Lady Delahunty and myself.

DONAL

I have no doubt whatever but he will be delighted to meet Lady Delahunty and yourself. But, of course, every man's trouble appears greater to himself, than to his neighbours. And as we all think more about ourselves than any one else, and as you have now partially recovered from the unexpected stroke of royal generosity, we might as well get down to business and fix up that match with Kitty and your son Finbarr.

SIR DENIS

With reference to the royal favour, Donal, I might as well be candid and say, that it wasn't altogether unexpected, because I knew somethin' was going to happen. I felt it in my bones.

KITTY

Nonsense, Sir Denis; it must have been the rheumatics you felt.

DONAL

That's all well and good, but what about the match?

KITTY

Spare yourself the trouble of trying to make a match for me.

DONAL

If you don't hold your tongue, I'll be put to the bother of lockin' you up in your own room, and feedin' you on promises until your spirit is broken. That's the only way to treat a contrary, impudent creature like you.

SIR DENIS

Let there be no crossness on my account, Donal.

DONAL

Well, I have carefully considered what we were discussin' last week, and I have decided to give three hundred pounds, twenty acres of rich loamy soil, without a rock, a furze bush, or a cobble stone in it, five milch cows, six sheep, three clockin' hens and a clutch of ducklin's. Provided, of course, that you will give the same. That much should be enough to give my daughter and your son a start in life. And I may tell you that's much more than herself and myself started out with. Well, Sir Denis, is it a bargain or is it not?

SIR DENIS

No two people could get a better start, Donal. But it isn't in my power to come to any settlement until herself, I mean Lady Delahunty, arrives. She is up at the dressmaker's, and should be here in a minute or two. [*Knock at the door. Kitty opens and Lady Delahunty enters. She is dressed in a new sealskin coat, black dress, and white petticoat and a badly fitting bonnet. Mrs. Corcoran is greatly impressed with her appearance and offers her a chair.*

MRS. CORCORAN AND DONAL

Congratulations, Lady Delahunty, congratulations. Be seated, be seated.

[*Mrs. Corcoran draws her chair near Lady Delahunty and while Donal and Sir Denis are talking, in an undertone, Mrs. Corcoran speaks.*

MRS. CORCORAN

That's a beautiful new coat, Lady Delahunty.

LADY DELAHUNTY (*proudly*)

Fifty-five guineas.

MRS. CORCORAN

'Tis worth more.

LADY DELAHUNTY

So Sir Denis says.

MRS. CORCORAN (*stoops and feels the edge of the lace petticoat, which is well exposed*)

That's the nicest piece of lace I have seen for many a long day.

LADY DELAHUNTY

Two pounds ten, and a bargain at that. And three pounds five for my bonnet makes sixty pounds, fifteen shillin's. Not to mention what I had to pay for Dinny's, I mean Sir Denis's new suit and tall hat.

MRS. CORCORAN

You could build a house or buy two fine horses for that much.

LADY DELAHUNTY

Indeed, and you could then.

DONAL

Now ladies, we must get our business finished, and we can talk after. I am offerin' three hundred pounds, twenty acres of land, five cows, six sheep, three clockin' hens, and a clutch of ducklin's, and want to know without any palaverin' or old gab, whether or not yourself and Sir Denis are prepared to do likewise.

KITTY

One would think that I was a cow or a sheep, myself, going to be sold to the highest bidder. But, thank God, I'm neither one nor the other. I have a mind and a will of my own, and I may as well tell you all that I will only marry the man who I will choose for myself.

DONAL

Every one of the women in ten generations of your family, on both sides, said the same, but they all did what they were told in the end, and you will do it, too. You will marry the man that I will choose for you, or go to the convent or America. And believe me, 'tisn't much of your own way you will get in either place.

KITTY

I will marry the man I want to marry and no one else.

SIR DENIS

Maybe 'tis the way she is only teasin' you.

DONAL

No, 'tis her mother's contrary spirit that's in her.

MRS. CORCORAN

Not her mother's, but her father's, contrary spirit.

DONAL

Enough now, I say. I'm boss here yet, and I'm not goin' to let my daughter, whom I have rared, fed, clad and educated, and all that cost me many a pound of my hard earned money, have a privilege that the kings, queens, royal princesses and grand duchesses themselves haven't.

MRS. CORCORAN

Wisha, don't be losin' your temper, Donal.

DONAL

'Tis enough to make any one lose their temper. If that sort of thing was permitted, every dacent father and mother in the country would be supportin' some useless son-in-law, and his children, maybe. The man who marries my daughter must be able to support her as I have supported you.

MRS. CORCORAN

Erra, hold your tongue. I never ate a loaf of idle bread in my life, and always supported myself, and earned enough to support you as well.

DONAL

I'll have no more of this tyranny in my own house, I say.

KITTY

Well, well, for goodness sake! What is all this nonsense about? I have already told you that I will marry my own man and no one else.

SIR DENIS

Now, Donal, when we come to consider the matter, perhaps, after all is said and done, maybe Kitty is right. You know, of course, that we all like to have our own way.

DONAL

Do we, indeed? Maybe 'tis the way you are tryin' to back out of your bargain.

LADY DELAHUNTY

He isn't tryin' to back out of anythin', Donal. But as we were sayin' to-day when we heard that His Majesty, the King of Great Britain and Ireland, Australia, Canada, and India, as well.—(*Looks at Sir Denis who is trying to light a clay pipe*) Ahem! ahem! Sir Denis, Sir Denis.

SIR DENIS (*bored*)
Alright, alright.

LADY DELAHUNTY
Didn't I tell you never to leave me see you with a clay pipe in your gob again? Where are the cigars I bought for you this morning?

SIR DENIS (*searches in his pocket and pulls out a cigar*)
Wisha the devil a taste can I get from one of them. I might as well be tryin' to smoke a piece of furze bush.

LADY DELAHUNTY
Taste or no taste, put that pipe back in your pocket. What would the King and his daughters think if they saw you suckin' an old dudeen like that?

KITTY
'Tis little bother any of us are to the King or his daughters, either, I'm thinking.

DONAL
I'll put a padlock on that mouth of yours, if you don't hold your tongue.

LADY DELAHUNTY
Well, as I was sayin', when His Majesty so graciously honoured Sir Dinny and myself, we held a long and lengthy consultation and came to the conclusion after a good deal of consideration, that it might be as well not to hurry Finbarr's marriage. We were thinkin' of sendin' him across to England to finish his education: so that he may be able to take his place with the foreign aristocracy.

SIR DENIS
Of course, we all know that there is no better hurler in the whole country, and no finer man ever cracked

a whip, and no better man ever stood behind a plough, or turned cows out of a meadow, but the devil a bit at all he knows about the higher accomplishments of the nobility.

LADY DELAHUNTY

Such as playin' cricket and polo, and drinkin' afternoon tea with a napkin on his knee, like one of the gentry themselves. And between ourselves, he cares no more about cigarettes than his father does about cigars.

SIR DENIS

Notwithstanding all that, 'tis my belief that after six months in England, he would be fit company for the best people in the land.

DONAL

What the blazes does he want learnin' to play polo for, when he must make his livin' as a farmer?

LADY DELAHUNTY

Listen now, Donal, and be reasonable. When —

DONAL

Is it the way you want to break off the match? The truth now, and nothin' else.

LADY DELAHUNTY

Of course, we don't want the match to be broken off. But now that Finbarr is heir to a title — well, we all know that Kitty is a very nice and good girl; but as Sir Denis says: "'Tis a pity that we should force people to marry against their will, and — "

DONAL

The long and short of it is that my daughter isn't good enough for your damn, flat-footed clodhopper of a son. Though 'twas Dinny himself that forced the match on me.

LADY DELAHUNTY (*indignantly*)

Sir Denis, if you please.

SIR DENIS

Donal, Donal, be reasonable and agreeable, man. You should know that people are never the same after royal favours have been conferred on them. And though I am perfectly satisfied with myself and my social standin', such as it is, yet, as you know, we must look to the future of our children.

DONAL

Well, of all the old mollycoddlin' bladderskites that ever I listened to, you beat them all.

SIR DENIS

Restrain yourself, Donal, and leave me finish. Well, I was about to say, when you interrupted, that when Finbarr has learnt how to behave like a real gentleman, and can hold a cup of afternoon tea on his knee without spillin' it all over himself, then he may aspire to higher things, and want a wife who can play the violin as well as the piano, and speak all the languages in the world also.

DONAL

Wisha bad luck and misfortune to your blasted impudence, to cast a reflection on my daughter, and she that can play twenty-one tunes on the piano, all by herself and from the music too. And she can play the typewriter as well, and that's more than any one belongin' to you can do. 'Tis well you know there's no more music in the Delahunty family than there would be in an old cow or a mangy jackass that you'd find grazin' by the roadside.

KITTY

Tell him all I know about Irish, French, and German too, father.

DONAL

The next thing I will tell him is to take himself and his bloody tall hat out of my house and never show his face here again.

LADY DELAHUNTY

I'm surprised at you to speak like that to Sir Denis.

DONAL

Sir Denis be damned, ma'am.

SIR DENIS (*as he rises to go and requests Lady Delahunty to do likewise*)

Lady Delahunty, if you please.

[*A loud knocking is heard at the door. Kitty opens and Constable Dunlea enters. As he stands by the door, he takes a letter from his pocket.*

CONSTABLE (*to Sir Denis*)

This is a message for you, sir, from the editor of the *Examiner*. The postman couldn't find you at home and asked me to deliver it, as he knew I was coming here to-night.

[*Sir Denis excitedly opens the letter and Lady Delahunty looks on with apparent satisfaction, as she thinks it is a personal letter of congratulation for Sir Denis. Sir Denis borrows Mrs. Corcoran's spectacles and reads the letter hurriedly and looks very crestfallen.*

LADY DELAHUNTY (*with a look of surprise*)

What's the matter, Sir Denis?

SIR DENIS

What isn't the matter would be a better question. 'Twas a mistake, Anastatia, a sad and sorry mistake!

LADY DELAHUNTY

What's a mistake?

SIR DENIS

Ourselves! I mean we weren't knighted at all. The editor of the *Examiner* sends his personal regrets and apology for printin' an unofficial telegram that was sent by some malicious person about myself being created a baronet.

LADY DELAHUNTY (*grabs the letter and spectacles. Adjusts the spectacles on her nose and reads. Swoons and falls into Sir Denis's arms*)

The saints protect us all! 'Tis the truth, surely!

MRS. CORCORAN (*gets a glass of water and gives it to Lady Delahunty*)

Here, now, take this, and you will be soon all right again.

LADY DELAHUNTY (*as she recovers, turns to Kitty*)

I suppose 'twas at your instigation that all this happened. You impudent, prevaricatin', philanderin' galavanter. Now we will be the laughin' stock of the whole country. If Sir Denis —

DONAL

Plain Denis, if you please, ma'am.

LADY DELAHUNTY (*to her husband*)

If you had only the good sense of refusin' the title itself, but —

SIR DENIS

We'll never be able to live down the shame and disgrace of it, Lady Delahunty.

DONAL

Plain Statia Delahunty, if you please.

LADY DELAHUNTY (*to Kitty*)

If you were worth the weight of yourself in gold and

could sing like a lark, I wouldn't give Finbarr to you now.

KITTY

I never asked for him, ma'am. I told you all that I would marry only my own man, and here he is. (*Calls Constable Dunlea to her side and takes his arm*) We are to be married next month, and then what need I care about titles or the aristocracy when I will have himself to support and protect me while he lives, and his pension if he should die, and the law of the land at my back all the time.

CURTAIN

RETRIBUTION

A Comedy in One Act

CHARACTERS

PATCHA CREMIN (*nicknamed* NAPOLEON) . . . *A carpenter*
NEDSERS BROPHY (*nicknamed* BOULANGER) . *A mason*
DANNUX TOUHY (*nicknamed* THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON) . . . . . *A mason*
MRS. FENNESSEY . . . . . *A lodging-house keeper*

RETRIBUTION

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

Scene: Bedroom in a country lodging house. There is one narrow bed and two chairs in the room, and a picture of Robert Emmet hangs on the wall. Patcha Cremin is lying in bed with his head covered. A loud knocking is heard at the door.

PATCHA (*startled, uncovers his head and looks about him. The knocking continues*)
Who's there? (*Thinking for a moment that he is at home and that his wife is calling*) Oh, is that you, Ellie?

MRS. FENNESSEY (*from without*)
It is not Ellie, then.

PATCHA (*not yet properly awake*)
And who is it?

MRS. FENNESSEY
'Tis me.

PATCHA (*angrily*)
And who the blazes are you?

MRS. FENNESSEY
Mrs. Fennessey, your landlady.

PATCHA
Oh, yes! Of course, Mrs. Fennessey, excuse me, ma'am. I thought I was at home and that my wife was callin' me to get up to go to work.

MRS. FENNESSEY
Are you in bed yet?

PATCHA

I am, ma'am.

MRS. FENNESSEY

When are you going to get up?

PATCHA

Why?

MRS. FENNESSEY

I want to say a few words to you.

PATCHA

I'm not feelin' too well, at all, to-day, and don't know when I'll be able to get up, ma'am.

MRS. FENNESSEY

Don't you, indeed?

PATCHA

No, I don't, ma'am.

MRS. FENNESSEY

Well then, if you're in bed and covered up, may I come in?

PATCHA (*draws the clothes about him*)

You can, ma'am.

MRS. FENNESSEY (*enters, stands in front of the bed and looks at Patcha*)

And might I ask what's the matter with you?

PATCHA

Oh, I don't exactly know, at all. I have a queer shaky feelin' runnin' down the spine and all over me. It must be the 'fluenza or maybe appendicitis, I'm thinkin'.

MRS. FENNESSEY

Well, if that's the case, you'll get up this very instant and clear out of my house, for I don't want a sick man on my hands. And you that didn't pay me a farthin' of rent for this last six weeks.

PATCHA

Didn't I promise to pay you a week over and above when I'd get a job? And this is the gratitute you're showin' me now for my kindness.

MRS. FENNESSEY

What a lot of good your promises would do for any one. I want my rent, and you can keep your promises.

PATCHA

Is it the way you'd be after turnin' a sick man from your door a cold freezin' day like this? And the snow thirty inches thick on the Galtee Mountains, and the air itself nearly frozen hard.

MRS. FENNESSEY

'Tis you're the nice sick man, indeed, with muscles on you like a statue or a prize fighter, and an appetite like an elephant. God knows then, you should be ashamed of yourself for nearly eating me out of house and home, and I a poor widow dependin' on the likes of you for a livin.' 'Tis I that wouldn't like to be the mother of a man such as yourself, God forgive you!

PATCHA

I'm surprised at a dacent woman like you, Mrs. Fennessey, to stand there abusin' me for my misfortune instead of bringin' me up a good warm breakfast to nourish my wastin' frame, and encourage the good spirits to come back to my heart.

MRS. FENNESSEY

I'm sick and tired of listenin' to you and your excuses, but I'm not goin' to listen to them any longer. So pack up and get out, or if you don't I'll get my brother Mike to fling you out, and believe me he won't take long to do it, either.

PATCHA

You're losin' all your dacency, Mrs. Fennessey.

MRS. FENNESSEY

Thank God for it, if I am then! But I'm gettin' back my good sense, and I won't talk or argue any more with you.

PATCHA

You should feel ashamed of yourself, Mrs. Fennessey.

MRS. FENNESSEY

Indeed then, I should, for puttin' up with the likes of you. You've got to be out of this house before twelve o'clock to-morrow and remember I mean what I say. [*She walks out and slams the door. Patcha sits up in bed, rearranges the bedclothes, then places his hand under his chin, and wrinkles his brow. Remains that way until he is disturbed by a knock at the door*

MRS. FENNESSEY (*opens, and holds the door ajar*)

There's a gentleman wants to see you.

PATCHA

Who is he? What is he like, and where does he come from?

MRS. FENNESSEY

How do I know where he comes from? He wanted to know if Napoleon lived here and I told him there was no one livin' here at present but one Patcha Cremin. Sure, that's who I mean, says he. Are you Napoleon?

PATCHA

Yes, I'm Napoleon.

MRS. FENNESSEY

Glory be to the Lord! What a purty name they got for you!

PATCHA

Did he say who he was?

MRS. FENNESSEY

He said he was an old friend of yours.

PATCHA

I wonder can it be the Duke of Wellington? Dannux Touhy, I mean.

MRS. FENNESSEY

Touhy! Touhy! That's the name. Will I send him up?

PATCHA

Do if you please, ma'am.

[*Mrs. Fennessey leaves the room, and in a short time Dannux Touhy enters.*

DANNUX (*as he shakes hands with Patcha*)

Well, well! 'Tis real glad that I am to see you. Sure I didn't expect to find my old friend Napoleon in the town of Ballinflask this blessed day. And I've heard that Boulanger is here also. Is that so?

PATCHA

It is so, then. And he'll be as surprised as myself to find the Duke of Wellington here before him when he arrives.

DANNUX

What makes you be in bed at this hour of the day? Is it the way that you're sick?

PATCHA

Not in the body, thank God, but in the mind and heart.

DANNUX

And why don't you get up and dress yourself, and go for a good long country walk?

PATCHA

I can't.

DANNUX

Why?

PATCHA

Sit down and I'll tell you. (*Dannux sits on a chair*) Last night as I was goin' to sleep, a knock came to the door, and when I said: "Who's there?" a voice answered back and said: "Boulanger." "Come in," says I. And lo and behold, who should walk in the door but Nedsers Brophy, himself. And of course, he had the usual poor mouth. He couldn't get a job in the town because he is such a poor mechanic no one would be bothered with him.

DANNUX

I'm not surprised at it. Sure he was never more than a botch at his best.

PATCHA

Well, he said, he hadn't a penny in his pocket, or the price of a night's lodgin'; so I invited him to sleep with me in this bit of a bed. And of course, he accepted. The same man never refused anythin' he could get for nothin' in his life.

DANNUX

I know him of old, the good-for-nothin' humbug.

PATCHA

The bed as you can see isn't very large, so when he turned in the middle of the night, I fell out on the floor, and when I turned he fell out. And there we were, fallin' in and fallin' out like two drunken sailors all night long. And when mornin' came, every bone in my body was as sore as a carbuncle.

DANNUX

And sure 'tis myself that didn't close an eye or stretch my limbs upon a bed at all last night, or eat a bit for

two long days, but kept walkin' the roads until I struck this town at daybreak.

PATCHA

God help us all!

DANNUX

And where's Boulanger now, might I ask?

PATCHA

He's gone out on a little message for me. He should be here any minute.

DANNUX

I suppose there's no use askin' you for that one pound two and sixpence that you borrowed from my brother, Lord Pebble, some time ago. I'm after gettin' a job from the parish priest to set a range in his kitchen, but I haven't either a trowel or a hammer, and unless I can raise the price of them, I'll lose the contract.

PATCHA

And when will you get paid?

DANNUX

The instant the job is finished.

PATCHA

How much will the tools cost?

DANNUX

Three shillin's, at least.

PATCHA

I don't know if I could spare that amount, but I might be able to give you a shillin' when Boulanger comes back.

DANNUX

Was it to the pawnshop you sent him?

PATCHA

'Twas indeed, then. And with the only suit of clothes I had too. We were both dead broke, and my land-

lady stopped the grub yesterday mornin'. And I haven't broken my fast since. So here I am now without a bit in the world but the shirt on my back.

DANNUX

The birds of the air or the fish in the sea couldn't be worse off, themselves. Why didn't you make Boulanger stay in bed and pawn his clothes instead of your own, you fool?

PATCHA

That would be the devil's own strange way to entertain your guest, wouldn't it?

DANNUX

That's the queerest story I ever heard.

PATCHA

Sure we must get a bit to eat somehow. 'Tis famished I am with the hunger, as it is.

[*Brophy staggers into the room slightly intoxicated.*

NEDSERS (*putting out his hand to Dannux*)

Well, well, well! How's my old pal Wellington? Who'd ever think of finding you here! (*As they shake hands*) There are no friends like the old ones. The world is a small place after all. Twas in Cork we met the last time and in Fermoy before that.

DANNUX

'Pon my word but I believe you're right.

PATCHA (*excitedly, to Nedsers*)

Where's the food I sent you for?

NEDSERS (*staggers to the side of the bed and sits down*)

Wait and I'll tell you what happened to me. All I got on your old suit of clothes was five shillin's, and if you don't believe me look at the ticket. (*Hands ticket*) Well, I went into a pub to get a drop of grog, and asked for a half shot of the best, put the five bob

on the counter, got my drink, put the change in my pocket, and lo and behold, when I went to look for it again, I couldn't find a trace of it high or low. Only for that I'd have brought you somethin' to eat. There's no use cryin' over spilt milk, is there, Dannux? Wellington, I should have said. Well, how are you, anyway? 'Tis a long time since we worked together. Isn't it?

PATCHA (*catching him by the back of the neck*)

Glory be to the Lord! Is it the way you are takin' leave of your senses? There's my only suit of clothes in pawn, and the money you raised on them gone, and you here with your belly full of dirty drink, and I with my belly empty and my guts rattlin' in want of food. 'Tis you that should feel ashamed of yourself to have me in such a condition and all on your account too.

NEDSERS

What should I feel ashamed about? Didn't I do my best? Blame the bla'gard who stole the money out of my pocket. What old talk you have. Didn't I disgrace myself by goin' into a pawnshop for you?

PATCHA

What am I to do at all!

DANNUX

'Tis a bad way to be in, surely. But I think I can see a way out of the difficulty.

NEDSERS

Good old Wellington! Good old Wellington! That's what your namesake said before he put the comether on Napoleon. What say, Patcha?

PATCHA

Don't be botherin' me. I'm more than disgusted with you.

DANNUX

Now, there must be no quarrelin'. We are all friends and we must stand by, and help each other, because there is only the loan of ourselves in the world. I have a job to go to, but I have no tools to work with. And I haven't a bit on my person that would be taken in the pawn, so I propose that Boulanger will give me his boots and that I will pawn them, and buy the tools I want. Then I will go to work, and when the job, which will only take me a few hours, is finished, I'll share the one pound one that his reverence said he'd give me. And as he said himself, 'twas little enough, but as times were bad he couldn't afford any more.

PATCHA

'Twas the Lord Himself that sent you in the door to us!

NEDSERS

Nothin' could be fairer. But look at my old boots, you wouldn't get a lump of candy from a rag man for them.

PATCHA

But why not give him your coat and vest? You'd easily get eight or nine shillin's on them and that much would buy the tools and get us all a bite to eat as well.

NEDSERS (*taking off his coat and vest*)

Enough said! Enough said!

DANNUX (*as he wraps them up in an old newspaper*)

I wouldn't be surprised if I'd get ten shillin's on them. And sure they can be released again as soon as I get paid for the job.

NEDSERS

That's right, that's the way I like to hear a man talkin'.

DANNUX (*as he takes the laces from Patcha's boots lying near the bed, and ties up the parcel*)

What else are we here for, but to be a help and a comfort to each other? Sure 'tis by each other we live. (*Places the parcel under his arm, puts on his hat and walks towards the door. Looks from one to the other*) Good-by, Napoleon—Good-by, Boulanger. May God bless you both.

PATCHA

What's that I hear? Aren't you comin' back with the money and the bit to eat for us?

DANNUX

Of course I am. I only mean good-by for the time I'll be away.

[*Exit Dannux. After he has gone Nedsers looks soberly at Patcha.*

NEDSERS

Only for the time he'll be away!

PATCHA

What's the matter with you, at all?

NEDSERS

I think I did a foolish thing.

PATCHA

What's that you're sayin', I say?

NEDSERS

I did a foolish thing! I know I did. But that's just like me. I brought my dacent impulses from my mother. God forgive her!

PATCHA

Is it the way you are afraid he won't return?

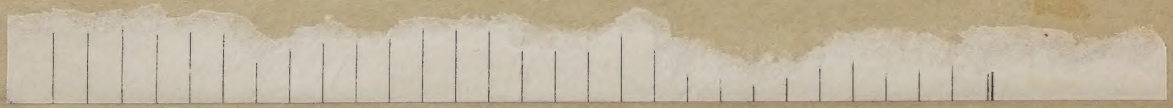
NEDSERS

I'm sure of it. I know he'll never return. He's the biggest bloody liar in the whole country and the biggest rogue too.

PATCHA (*as he jumps out of bed with the blanket around him*)

The saints and angels protect us all! Sure I forgot that the parish priest is away in England on his vacation. And we are to be flung out on the roadside to-morrow, and in our shirts too!

CURTAIN



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